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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[LORD RAVENHILL STARTED BACK, WITH HIS EYES RIVETED ON THE WHITE FIGURE.]

LADY RAVENHILL'S SECRET.

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CHAPTER XVII.

The next morning Nellie made excuses to stay at home, whilst all the brilliant household, mounted or in carriages, set out for a neighbouring meet and luncheon party, which would employ their idle time till well on in the afternoon. She had not appeared at breakfast; and now she sat down, buried in a little low chair, over the boudoir fire, holding a magazine in her hand, and staring intently at the glowing embers. Would she could read some good advice there! something to tell her how to steer her life—for she felt completely adrift, and hopelessly wretched. In spite of the diamond rings on her fingers, the velvet gown on her back, she would gladly change places with the very laundry-maid that she had met on the stairs half-an-hour ago.

A firm, bold tread, a widely flung door behind her, and glancing in the glass over the mantelpiece, she saw a man enter in a scarlet hunting

coat—her husband. Just precisely the very person she did not wish to see!

"Good-morning! What has brought you back so early?" she said, without rising, and only half turning her head.

"To have an uninterrupted talk with you," he promptly replied, pulling up a chair, and getting rid of his gloves, hat, and hunting crop. "I wanted to see you by yourself, and to ask you what I have done that I am in your black books?"

For all answer Nellie turned her face steadily towards the fire, and held up the magazine between herself and him, as though he represented a blaze in his own person.

"Come!" he said, hitching his chair a little closer, "I mean to know. I've badgered my brains till they are in a hopeless muddle trying to think how I could possibly have offended you, and I give it up! We were friendly enough at Seabach, and here you treat me as if I were a kind of social pariah. You won't speak to me, look at me, ride with me, dance with me—you won't have anything to say to me!"

"No, I won't!" she answered, sullenly.

"And why? Surely you will tell me the reason, or perhaps, like a woman, you have none," he added, stung by her voice and attitude, which were aggressive, to say the least of it.

"I have a reason—an excellent reason!" she replied, looking round at last, but keeping her eyes on the floor.

"And am I not to know it?"

"No, never!" emphatically.

"Never! You are enough to try the patience of Job," he said, angrily springing to his feet. "You quarrel with me for nothing, and I have always been so anxious to please you and be your friend, and this is the thanks I get!"

"Why are you so desirous of my good opinion?" she said, speaking half across the room.

"That is more than I think myself!" he answered, bitterly. "Often I have tried to solve the problem why I should have liked you from the first—why I should have your good opinion—why I should seek almost against my will, as now, your society. Goodness knows it is not that you are so pleasant to me—it is not your manner, nor your looks. I

can't account for it, except," with a sarcastic laugh, "you have thrown a spell over me—maybe you have the evil eye?"

"Maybe, I have!" angrily, tapping her shoe on the fender.

"Perhaps you are some relation of mine, though I don't know it!" he said, pacing the room, with his hands behind his back, and his eyes on the ground. "Do you know, it has sometimes struck me, that you have a very strong likeness to our family. It's about the mouth, and we are not a common type!" he proceeded, as if talking to himself. "However, I suppose you think I'm a raving lunatic?" he concluded, glancing at her, as she stood with her back to him, trembling from head to foot.

"A family likeness!" he was getting hot as they say in magic music—very hot. She felt her face on fire—what would he say next?

"Has your husband anything to do with this sudden dislike you have taken to me?" was the next rather startling question.

A nod was her only reply, for she had lost the present power of speech.

"I'm sure he need not place any embargo on your acquaintance with me," he proclaimed, in a much aggrieved voice. "Have I ever in any way presumed on our friendship? Have I not treated you as I would my own cousin—or—or sister? If it was that fellow Montagu, he might interfere!" taking another turn up and down.

"Lord Ravenhill, you have no right to talk to me like this, and I won't have it!"

"Oh, won't you?" leaning his arms over the back of a chair, and surveying her very coolly. "Just for once I must say my say—positively the last time! I tell you you are encouraging that fool Montagu, and making a greater idiot of him than he is by nature, and he will take an oil, two oils, if you give him half-an-inch. I know his little ways well, and I warn you—have nothing to do with him. If you were my wife I would not suffer you to speak to him, much less pass whole evenings with him behind a big fan! I did not know that that was good form, Nellie!" he concluded, reproachfully.

"Please to keep your opinions to yourself! You talk of Captain Montagu!" she cried, breathless with passion and excitement. "You say you would not allow your wife to speak to him!" laughing hysterically. "You!" with ineffable scorn, measuring him from head to foot. "Look at home. People who live in such large glass houses had better not throw stones."

"I am not aware that my glass house is more conspicuous than my neighbour's," he answered, stiffly.

"Perhaps not; perhaps it is only a cottage in a wood!" Seeing him change colour, she proceeded. "Here is your ring, sir!" tossing it on the table. "It is of no use to me, nor do I value it. Give it—"

"To whom?" he said, sternly, taking it up, but still keeping his eyes fixed on her face. "To whom shall I give it?"

"To Mrs. Derwent, or—"

"Who is taking my name in vain?" said the gay widow, appearing in the doorway all fur and velvet. "How early you came home, Hugh," she proceeded, as she came forward and unfastened her hat and boa. "Have you two been quarrelling?" she asked, in a tone of amiable inquiry, glancing sharply from one to the other with her rolling eyes.

"Oh, dear, no!" replied Hugh, moving near to the fire, and making a hole with the poker in the very heart of the embers. "What could have put such an absurd idea into your head?" As he spoke Nellie, who had the use of her eyes, though tongue-tied, saw him deliberately drop the ring into the very centre of the fire. Turning, he met her glance, and said, "There is an end of everything! I never offer my friendship twice," and, turning away, he picked up his gloves and hat, and walked out of the room with the utmost composure.

"What was he muttering?" said Connie, coming over to the hearthrug. "I'm sure you have been having a row, and what on earth are

you poking out of the fire?" she cried, as Nellie sank suddenly on her knees, and began to rake out the live coals with a kind of frenzied excitement.

Her efforts were successful. In another moment the ring—blackened, but not much the worse—was restored, and evolving in the middle of the fire-shove.

"Well! I do declare—his signet ring!" exclaimed Mrs. Derwent, with clasped hands. "And he threw it into the fire, or did you? What does it all mean? I insist on knowing!"

"It means nothing," replied Nellie, emphatically, raising the ornament into her lap with cautious, gingerly fingers. "At least, it means nothing now! Will you do me a favour, Mrs. Derwent," lifting up her scorched face to the widow, who was panting for particulars. "Do not say anything about this to anyone."

"Won't you tell Hugh you saved the ring, and give it him back?" she cried, amazed.

"No!" very shortly. "And what are you going to do with it? Keep it as a souvenir?"

"Yes." "Then the more fool you!" said Mrs. Derwent, with a contemptuous laugh, collecting her hat and muff, and sweeping out of the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mrs. DERWENT'S visit had been prolonged long past the stipulated week, and so had Lord Ravenhill's; but they were really going to tear themselves away from The Grange within a day or two, despite their Hostess's entreaties.

A few days after the scene with the ring, whilst Nellie was dressing for dinner, a low, but peremptory tap came to the door; and Mrs. Derwent entered, a trailing, magnificent figure in canary-coloured silk, with deep black lace flounces, and diamond stars in her hair.

This visit was an unexpected invasion—never had Nellie been so honoured before! She was standing before the glass, brush in hand, as this gorgeous apparition advanced upon her. There was something very odd about Mrs. Derwent that evening, she said to herself, as she gazed at her in astonished silence. Her face was as white as a sheet of paper; her eyes shone like two black covens; her lips were twitching as she crossed the room, like a tragedy queen, and took up a position before the fire.

"I have dressed early, and come to pay you a little visit," she said, at last, holding out her hands over the flames, and speaking over her shoulder to Nellie.

Nellie could see that for some unknown reason the hands of strong-minded, self-controlled Mrs. Derwent were shaking like aspen leaves.

"Pray go on with your dressing, and I can chat to you all the same," she said, patronizingly. "I have just heard two pieces of news. Which will you have first?"

"Whichever you please!" said Nellie, carelessly.

"I don't think either of them will please you, Lady Ravenhill!" said Conny, bringing out each word with a separate jerk.

Nellie's brush fell out of her hands with a crash that did not improve its ivory back.

"What did you call me, Mrs. Derwent?" she asked, as she stooped to pick it up, after a strangely long pause.

"I called you by your right name. What do you mean by masquerading about the world, and taking people in as Mrs. Hill?" she added, raising her voice, which was trembling with passion. "Oh, I've found you out, you see!"

"How?" beginning to brush her hair.

"By this envelope!" producing one from the breast of her dress, and holding it out to her companion, with a certain vicious triumph. "I've long been anxious to know who you were, and this envelope seems to have been blown across my path by Providence! You went to the Post office yourself to day. You received and opened a letter there, and dropped the envelope. I saw it, picked it up, and read,—

"Lady Ravenhill, care of Mrs. Hill,

"Monckton Grange,

"Mr. Sheepminster."

"But that proves nothing," said Nellie, quickly.

"It proves everything! From what I know of you, you are the last to open other people's letters. I'll give you that much justice. I have been adding two and two together all the afternoon, and I have put the puzzle together. I heard that Lady Ravenhill had recovered her sight. Never mind who told me!" with a gesture of her hands. "I heard she was living in retirement, and that she was not bad-looking; and now I remember you telling me on the pier at Seabeach that I would never be Lady Ravenhill as long as you lived; and, of course, you had every reason to say so! I showed my cards too plainly that day, but—" shrugging her shoulders—"there is no use in crying over spilt milk. Now, what is your end and aim? Clever as I am, it has not dawned on me yet. Do you flatter yourself that you will gain Lord Ravenhill's heart, and then—grand tableau, fall at his feet, and say—I am your wife!" she asked, with a sneer.

"No, I don't flatter myself in any such way!" replied Nellie, coolly.

"Ah! I see. We have heard of the beauty in the wood, and we are jealous! I was going to tell you all about her as my second piece of news; but I have been forestalled," with a mocking laugh.

To this Nellie made no reply, but began twisting up her hair, with hasty, shaking fingers. Should she tell this odious woman out of the room or not? She asked of her pale reflection in the glass why should she put up with her insults?

"What can he see in her?" demanded Mrs. Derwent, with a gesture of scorn. "A low-bred, common-looking maid! It's too trifling, and it's too true. He is actually infatuated, and no体体 nobody knows of his fair Rosamond; but they do, and if he were my husband I should have small scruple in exacting the part of Queen Eleanor," glancing impressively at Nellie. "What are you going to do, Lady Ravenhill?"

"Nothing!" said Nellie, shortly.

"What will you give me to keep your secret, or may it be considered public property?" pulling down the corners of her mouth.

"No, by no means!" quickly. "I hope as you have discovered it accidentally you will respect it!"

"It must come out, sooner or later. You won't go on like this. One day he will know; and he ought to know now!"

"Oh, no, he shall never know!—never with my consent!"

"Probably not; but you see, my dear, that you are in my power. It is as I please, now; not as you please!" eyeing her victim as a cat watching a mouse, between her long, black eyelashes. "What will you give me to keep the secret? Come, now, make a bold bid!" encouragingly.

"What can I do? What can I give you? Oh! do have pity on me, Mrs. Derwent! What good can it do you to make me miserable? I am wretched enough as it is! All I ask is to get away from here, and hide myself!"

"And never see Hugh again!" incredulously.

"And never see Hugh again!" she repeated, with tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Well, I want money! So if you will hand me over what will pay my cormorant of a dressmaker, I will give you my solemn word and honour never to breathe your real name to mortal without your permission! Come, that's fair enough, isn't it?"

"Yes! quite fair," assented Nellie, faintly.

"But why do you hide your identity? You must tell me that as well," said Mrs. Derwent, as if struck by a sudden thought.

"He only married me for my money. We agreed to be always strangers. I don't want him to think—covering her face with her hands—"that I am a spy on him, or wish to take up the position I resigned of my own free will."

"You are, excuse me, a little Quixotic idiot, Lady R——. We won't say the whole name, eh? If I were in your shoes I should feel as if I had the ball at my feet. A wife, let me tell you, has a great deal in her power, and can make herself very unpleasant. I should bring a hornet's nest about his ears if I were in your place. Why?" walking to the window and opening the shutters, "it's snowing hard. I thought it was not far off from the feel in the air this afternoon. There's the second bell, and your eyes are as red as if they had been painted!" she remarked, with contemptuous compassion. "No man in this world is worth a tear—not even Hugh—they are all bad. I sometimes wish the race was extinct. By-the-way," passing with her hand on the door, and gazing back at Nellie, who was galloping into a black lace gown, "I was nearly forgetting to tell you that Madame Céline's account is fifteen hundred pounds some old shillings, but I daresay it will be only a flea-bite to you, Lady R——! You can give her a cheque to-morrow before posh hour. *Au revoir!*" So saying she went out and closed the door after her.

A flea-bite! Nellie was staggered. Where in the world would she get the money! Her expenses were large, and, though not extravagant, she spent the whole of her allowance. She might possibly get an advance, she said to herself, as she fastened on her ornaments with lightning speed; but she would have to retrench, to sell her horses, to live very prudently, to save for the next year. However, anything—anything was better than having her secret told open-mouthed by Mrs. Derwent. What awful bad luck, its having come into her hands, of all people. "But it is just like me," said Nellie, with a kind of sob, as she opened the door. "I have been born under some evil star; all kinds of things happen to me that never touch other people; it would be a good thing if I was dead. I wonder why I was ever born?" Her wishes and wonders were brought to a full stop by the drawing-room door; in another moment she was one of the smiling, chatting crowd who were complacently awaiting the last gong. "Who would think," she thought, glancing over at Mrs. Derwent, who was conversing on church matters with the Lord Bishop of the Diocese (Ozony could adapt herself to any society), "that I have just promised that woman fifteen hundred pounds to hold her tongue!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THAT night Nellie could not sleep; she went to bed between eleven and twelve like the rest of the household, but could not even close her eyes. The events of the last few days seemed burnt into her brain, and now it was Mrs. Derwent, now it was Hugh, who seemed enacting whole past scenes over and over again.

She gazed at the fire, watching it slowly, slowly sinking lower and lower, but the later the hour the more wakful she felt. She tried to divest her mind, she counted a hundred, she reckoned the pattern on the paper of the room, up and down and across, all in vain, and she was as wide awake as ever.

There was nothing for it but to read herself to sleep, so she rose and hunted about the room for a book, but no book could she find, and she now remembered she had taken it downstairs to the morning-room. The morning-room was a long way off, a very great number of twisting passages had to be travelled over between her apartment and that; but the house was quiet, she would see no one, and she would go.

So slipping on a very elegant white cashmere dressing-gown and a pair of shoes, she started off candle in hand down the corridor, down the passage, down the stairs, she crept as noiselessly as possible, and made her way to the very place where she had laid down Whyte Melville's latest novel. How odd and empty and silent the room looked by the light of one candle! What horrid dark corners it had! She pulled back a curtain and looked out, it was a clear starry night now; a slim young moon was overhead, and all the park lay under a

thick coverlet of snow. Ugh! how cold it looked, and what was that noise? she asked herself—a creaking in the wainscot, the swinging of an outside shutter; was it the ghost?

Her heart beat as loud as the ticking of a clock; if she saw anything she was sure she would die. She was excessively frightened, down in the lower part of that great silent house all alone, and snatching up her candle she fled, without even looking behind her, up the big, shallow oak stairs, along the corridor and into the west wing. But, alas! just as she turned a corner a malignant blast from one of the many draughts blew out her candle, and left her with nothing but a smoking wick.

She was more frightened than ever as she began to grope about, along the walls, feeling for doors, for any known landmark, and failing in vain, for it seemed to her hours. At last she came upon a familiar turning, and oh, joy! there was a door with a light under it—her own door—her own fire.

Without a moment's hesitation she turned the handle and walked in. It was not her room, not at all like it. Miserable wretch, she had mistaken the turning. She was in the bachelors' wing! No gorgeous toilet-tables, cheval glasses or wardrobes were to be seen; everything was plain, masculine looking and comfortable.

The room was empty Nellie soon discovered; the bed unoccupied and undisturbed. A dress-coat lay upon it as if thrown off in a hurry; a fire burned upon the hearth—a fire that had evidently been banked up to last for the night; two candles, burned nearly down to their sockets, glimmered on the chimney-piece, and a small round clock between them slowly chimed out "two." A roomy arm-chair was drawn up near the fire as if awaiting the return of the tenant of this very comfortable apartment; on the hearth-rug just beside it lay a letter wide open, the first page turned upward and seeming to challenge attention. Nellie's sharp eyes had read the first three lines almost before she knew what she was doing, for the writing was very large and plain and black.

"DEAR HUGH,—I shall expect you to-night, let nothing detain you."

Nellie withdrew her eyes and stepped back as if she had seen a reptile. So this was her husband's room. She recognised it now by Rosie Waller's love-letter!

Of course he had gone to keep his appointment. Supposing she were to wait up and reproach him like the traditional wife, and save herself a large sum of money by presenting herself as Lady Ravenhill! "No—no! not to be thought of," she said, half aloud, as she warmed her frozen hands over the blaze, in the firm conviction that she would not be disturbed for hours. It was only two o'clock, the fire was good, the chair deliciously comfortable. She felt a kind reckless pleasure in tampering with danger; there was something very novel and thrilling in the sensation of sitting and warming herself at her husband's fire, as she would at the heat of a volcano. Any moment there might be an eruption, but meanwhile the sensation was new and piquante.

She became bolder and bolder as she grew warmer; she actually had the hardihood to pick up Rosie's letter in the tongs and hold it over the flames, watching it curl, then turn biscuit-colour—brown—then flame up, and finally go sailing up the chimney in lazy black fragments.

"So much for that," she said, aloud, putting down the tongs and once more leaning back in the chair with her pretty little feet crossed on the fender, her arms crossed behind her head, and her eyes fixed on the clock. "I must be going soon," she muttered, "half-past two."

So saying she slowly rose and proceeded to relight her candle by one of those on the chimney-piece, and as she was in the act of doing so a kind of click, a turning of a lock, made her start and turn round, candlestick in hand. It would be hard to say which was the most startled, her husband or herself. A door,

which looked like that of a hanging closet, was wide open, and a sharp, bitter gust of wind came rushing up a corkscrew staircase after Lord Ravenhill, who started back with his eyes riveted on the white figure at the fire-place.

His face was deathly pale, his top coat thrown wide open, and on his head a round felt hat.

Escape unseen was out of the question for Nellie, and although she and Hugh had not spoken to each other for three days—not since he had thrown the ring in the fire—yet, driven to desperation like a stag at bay, she determined to make the best of it, and on the instant had made up her mind to show a bold front, and carry off matters with a high hand.

"Please to come in and shut the door, the wind is enough to cut one in two. I must apologise for this intrusion," she added, as he obeyed her, "I went down for a book, and coming back my candle went out, and I found myself here by mistake instead of in the other wing. Oh! what has happened to your hand?" she exclaimed, seeing his shirt cuff and hand covered with blood.

"Only a cut," he said. "I'm afraid it's rather in a bad place, between the finger and thumb," twisting his handkerchief still more tightly round it, and sitting down on the nearest chair, as if completely exhausted.

Lockjaw was the first thing Nellie thought of as she made a movement towards the ball.

"What are you going to do?" he said, sharply.

"Rouse the servants and send for a doctor," she answered, without a moment's hesitation.

"Nonsense!" impatiently. "Excuse me, but if you would not mind looking for my flask—it's on the table somewhere," here his voice became almost inaudible, and beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead.

Was he going to die, or faint, or what? Nellie rushed to the table, turned out half the contents of his dressing-box, seized the flask, poured out some brandy and held it to his lips.

"There, I'm better!" he said, in a few minutes. "I'm awfully ashamed to give you all this trouble, but I've sprained my arm, I'm afraid, as well as cut my hand; if you could tie it up for me I should be so much obliged. You see I don't want to knock up the house," he added, candidly, "and as you happened to be on the spot—"

"Oh, certainly, I'll do it, of course," said Nellie, who had strong nerves and was handy with her fingers. "I shall want some bandages."

"Plenty of handkerchiefs over there in that sachet, and here's one," drawing another out of his breast-pocket. In doing so, left handed and awkward as he was, a bow of ribbon—a woman's bow—fell out on the table between him and his companion.

She recognized it at once—it was Rosie's—she had worn it that evening at the cottage, a pink and white checked ribbon bow, in the shape of a true lover's knot. Nellie felt inclined to throw the token in his face, rush out of the room, and leave him to his own resources, but he looked so unconscious of any harm, so white and so haggard, that she thought better of her impulse, and proceeded to bathe, plaster, and bind his hand to the best of her ability.

He seemed in great pain from his arm, but tried to make light of it, and to smile his thanks and praises of her surgical skill.

"I think you ought to have something done to your arm," she said, imperatively. "See how it has swelled up. Your sleeve ought to be cut."

"But you can do that!" he replied, eagerly. "I don't want anyone to know that I was out to-night, if it can be helped. I was obliged to go on business—private business—and coming home in a hurry I was so blinded with the snow that, instead of jumping the wall in the usual place, I went about forty yards to the left, and landed in a stone quarry—not a deep

one, but still it was a long drop, and trying to save myself I did this," holding up his wounded arm.

"Why could you not do your business in the day-time?" said Nellie, caustically.

"Impossible, in this instance," he uttered, calmly, "and I wish my outing to be kept a profound secret. Can I trust you?"—looking at her anxiously—"it is almost a matter of life and death. Perhaps that is saying too much; at any rate, it is of the most vital consequence."

"Yes, you may trust me," said Nellie. "I am rather a good hand at keeping a secret," she added, impressively. "I know more than you think, but, of course, it is no affair of mine," snipping, as she talked, all round the sleeve of his coat, and gently drawing it over his swollen and sensitive arm.

"What do you know?" he demanded incredulously.

"Oh, never mind! I'm afraid that what I know is not much to your credit, Lord Ravenhill!"

"That shows you know nothing," he said, quietly. "I daresay you will hear me accused of something that will surprise you very much; but I have no more to do with it—I am as innocent as you are yourself. I—but no matter," and here he closed his eyes, leaned back in the chair, and looked as if he were going to faint again.

Between binding up his hand, and relieving his arm, and hunting for various remedies, such as sticking-plaster, eau-de-cologne, &c., time had gone rapidly. It was nearly four o'clock when Nellie left her patient and stole noiselessly back to her own cold, dark, empty room, and crept into bed at last.

Was it all a dream? she asked herself in the morning, when her maid appeared at her side with her hot water and cup of fragrant tea in an exquisite Sévres cup. Had she dreamt it? she asked herself, as she rubbed her eyes.

The hunt for the book, losing her way, finding herself in the writing-room, Rosie's letter, her husband's sprained arm! How could she have attended him so coolly and composedly, just as if she had been a hospital nurse? Her series of lectures had come in very useful; she had not felt in the least awkward or embarrassed as she ought to have done—but perhaps she *dreamt* it. She had not had half enough sleep, that was one thing very certain, she said to herself, as she turned round to take a little more slumber, whilst her maid prepared her bath and got ready her things.

"Dear me, ma'am!" she exclaimed, in a shocked voice, "how did you get all this blood over the front of your new dressing-gown? Did you hurt yourself in any way?"

"Hurt myself!" said Nellie, suddenly, raising herself on her elbow and gazing at the robe de chambre, which showed a dark stain all the way down the front.

"Oh! I cut my finger with a penknife," half burying her face in the clothes whilst she delivered herself of this falsehood.

"Dear, dear me! it must have been a bad cut. Shall I see to it before you dress?"

"No, no!" thrusting her hand far under the bolster, in case Browne should come over to make a personal examination, "it was nothing. Never mind."

"That was a bad piece of work last night, ma'am. The postman brought the news," proceeded Mrs. Browne, as she shook out her mistress's evening dress with vigorous shakes.

"What was that?" inquired Nellie, with a loudly beating heart, and a presentiment of some evil tidings.

"It was an 'orrible murder!" said Browne, with unctuous, doling out the information so as to make the most of it—"a terrible business!"

"A murder!" gasped her mistress.

"Yes, ma'am," putting down the dress, and warming to her subject now with arms akimbo and lengthened visage. "You 'ave never 'eard of the young woman perhaps; she lived at the gate of Craven Park; but she got into trouble of some sort and was packed

about her business. She lived in a cottage not far from Kingsfoot with an old uncle—a lonely place—"

"Well, yes; go on—get on!" cried Nellie, in a frenzy of impatience.

"And she was found this morning with her brains beaten in, and the child too!"

"Great heavens!" ejaculated Nellie, in a smothered voice.

"Yes, ma'am, fully dressed in the kitchen—the child was in his cot; but she, poor thing, had had a struggle for her life, they say, and fought all round the room. There were bits of her dress torn out, as if she'd been fighting with a wild beast—that old uncle of hers—"

"Yes; where was he?"

"He is half-witted, you know, and no more to be depended on than 'mad Tom' down in village—a miserable, frightened, stammering gabby!" said Browne, forgetting her usual elegant language in the excitement of the narrative. "He was like a log; they might have burnt the house over his head for all the good he would do! He says it was the

"And have they any clue?" faltered Nellie, with her tongue cleaving to the roof of her mouth.

"I believe not, ma'am—at least, not at present; but, of course, whoever did it is not far off. It was done, they say, about two o'clock this morning, and he is safe to be caught, whoever he be, before night."

Nellie felt as if she was going to faint, the room was swimming round. Who could be the murderer? Who but Hugh? Everything pointed to him—the late hour, his absence, his return just at half-past two, his mysterious errand, his ghastly appearance, his anxiety to keep his absence secret, his saying that it was a matter of life and death, her bow of ribbon, the letter, his wounded arm, the cut, the scratches on his hands!

Oh! there were only too many proofs, she said to herself, as she buried her head under the clothes. What she herself alone could testify to could hang him. Wretch, unnatural, inhuman monster! What was his motive for the ghastly deed? A quarrel—jealousy? What—and the child too!

Nellie's face was livid—was chalk colour, as she dressed. For once in her life she ardently wished for rouge; she would have given twenty pounds for a little colour.

Browne sympathetically remarked on her mistress's appearance as she brushed her hair out and fastened her dress,—

"You do look quite shocking, ma'am. This terrible story 'ave given you an upset; try a little sal volatile, it will steady your nerves."

And fortified by a dose Nellie descended late to the breakfast-table. All were assembled, and the meal was in full swing as she entered. She had to undergo the whole recital of the murder over again. Nothing was spared her, sickening little details were added, that made her very blood turn to ice in her veins, by an old gentleman—her neighbour, who absolutely not supped, but breakfasted on horrors.

Nellie made a feint of eating, breaking up toast with shaking fingers, and feeling at times as if she would cry out: "There—there is the murderer!" and point a retributive finger at her husband.

He sat nearly opposite, whiter than the table, with his arm in a sling. What lie had he told the company about *that*? He looked ten years older than he had done yesterday, and he did not eat a morsel.

No wonder, with the brand of Cain upon him since he had last broken bread. What amazed and confounded Nellie was his insisting on accompanying Mr. Monckton to the scene of the tragedy—in spite of his arm, in spite of the weather, in spite of *everything*.

Mr. Monckton was a magistrate, and must take old Waller's deposition, such as it was, and view the bodies. But what took Hugh, red-handed, to the scene of blood? Was it the extraordinary fascination that draws

murderers back to the tragic spot, as Bill Sykes was drawn back to London and the rope?

(To be continued.)

GOLDEN GRAIN.

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CHAPTER VII.

A VACANT PLACE.

I sat the room whirling round with me, and Dr. Legrange saved me from falling by putting his arm round me and supporting me to a chair.

"You are overdone," he said, kindly, as he rang the bell for the under-housekeeper, who had been waiting in the next room; "worn out and agitated; you must refresh yourself and rest awhile, and then we will talk."

I shook off the deadly sickness that was creeping over me and stood up.

"You are very kind," I said "it has all been so sudden, and I did not know—"

"That Mrs. Ormsby was your mother—of course not; neither did I till she was taken ill this time. Yes, my dear, look at her again before we go if you wish, she is not in the least disfigured by death; it is only like a sleep, after all."

I went forward and took another look at the silent figure on the bed—all that was left of the only relation I knew of in the world. The doctor was right; there was no disfigurement there,—the hard, set lines seemed to have gone out of the face, and to have left a softness that was quite new to me. I laid my lips on the cold forehead, and let the doctor lead me from the room. He made me eat and drink, and the food revived and strengthened me; and then Mrs. Paine, the under-housekeeper, took me to a bright little room, all white and fresh-looking, and insisted on my undressing and going to bed.

"Trouble, miss! don't speak of it," she said when I said something about what she was doing for me. "I shouldn't think anything a trouble for anyone belonging to the good lady that is gone. Oh, poor dear! she never thought anything a trouble that she could do for anyone; our poor people here have lost a good friend in losing her."

"Was she so much beloved?" I asked, trying to reconcile my own remembrances of my mother with this eulogium. I could not fancy her being gentle or kind in her manner to anyone.

"That she was, miss; we have never had anyone here—this is rather a difficult place, you see—who won everybody's good will as she did. She seemed to spend her life trying what good she could do. I think she had seen sorrow herself, and so had sympathy with everyone else who suffered. And you are sure you are comfortable, miss?" she added, as she drew the blind down and prepared to leave me to myself for awhile.

I thanked her and told her I was very comfortable, as indeed I was. The soft bed was delightful after the long weary journey, though I felt sure that my mind was too much occupied to let me sleep. I would lie for an hour, and then I would get up and speak to Dr. Legrange about the papers my mother had mentioned just before her death.

My senses were all in a whirl, the extraordinary revelation that had just been made to me, my mother's death, and the wild legacy of revenge that she had bequeathed to me with her dying lips, all began to run through my head in a strange confusion, mixed with school recollections and wonderings as to what had become of my school-fellows. And in the midst of it all—in the very act of thinking that I could not sleep, and it was no use lying there—I lost myself.

Nature had asserted her right to supremacy, and I slept long and dreamlessly. I woke to find it daylight still, and Mrs. Paine at my

side with something on a tray in her hand, and a smile on her pleasant face.

"Are you rested, miss?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied, "nicely, thank you. What time is it?"

"Half-past six," she said, smiling again. "Nearer seven perhaps; we are early people at Navarre House!"

"Half past six!" I said, in astonishment. In the morning, do you mean?"

"Yes, in the morning," was her answer; and found I had slept for hours."

"The doctor breakfasts at eight!" the housekeeper said. "He will be glad of your company."

I dressed myself, and went down to find Dr. Legrange walking with a group of people in a very pretty garden. They were all his patients as he told me afterwards; but I saw no sign of madness in any one of them. I said so, and he said that the maddest people were sometimes the sanest in outward seeming; and was going to give me a case in point, when he suddenly stopped himself as if he had been going to speak on a forbidden topic. I asked him what case he was going to cite, and he said he was only speaking generally, and began to talk of my mother, asking me a good many questions regarding her life before she came to Navarre House, and whether I knew anything about her antecedents.

I was obliged to tell him that I knew nothing. No one was more ignorant than I was about her in every way. She had never told me anything till I had come to see her die; and I wept as I spoke, to think how completely she had cut me off from her confidence and love.

"Ah, well!" the good doctor said. "She had her reasons, doubtless, and perhaps she has told you them in the packet she has left with me for you. I think I can understand a little of her conduct, though, of course, I have not the full clue. It may be, my dear—excuse my calling you so; but you might be my daughter in point of years, you know. It may be, I say, that you will fully understand some day, when you come to know more about your mother's family, and how she was brought up."

After our breakfast, at which I could only make a pretence of eating, for my heart was full, the doctor took me to his study, and gave me the packet my mother had entrusted him with.

"There is a little money, too, my dear," he said. "Our good Mrs. Ormsby was a most careful woman, and her savings were invested with the utmost regularity; but everything belonging to her will be put into your hands immediately after the funeral—indeed, before if you like."

"Oh, no!" I said hastily. "I should not like to meddle with anything before. They were hers, and she is here still."

I had a curious reluctance to touch anything with that dead, still form lying in that curtained room; and I think the doctor and Mrs. Paine liked me all the better that I did not put my hand to anything in my mother's apartments. I occupied the sitting-room downstairs that had been hers, and everything in it seemed to speak of her with an eloquent tongue. I was stunned, and full of sorrow; but I could not feel the grief that a child should feel for the loss of a parent. I had never known her as such. She had put me away from her by her own act, and forfeited by so doing the love I would have given her with all my heart; and she had left me now with a legacy of hate, and a mission of revenge that had no savour of motherly love in them, and which I could hardly understand as yet.

I put the packet away; I could not open it any more than I could look at and turn over her things while she lay above ground, and spent the best part of a day writing to Madame Loventhal and dear Dorothy, telling them of all that had come about, and how the aunt that had seemed to pay so grudgingly for me at the monastery school, was really my mother.

My tears fell fast upon the paper as I wrote,

and thought that, in all probability, I might never see those two dear friends again. Our paths in life would lie so wide apart now; my beautiful Dorothy with the quaint name, and the queenly grace, would be drifted away from me, farther and farther as the time went on. My position would necessarily be humble—at least, for a long time to come. Even if what my mother said was true, and I had a father who was rich, I might never find him; or, if I did find him, he might refuse to acknowledge me—might persecute me even as he had persecuted my mother.

I told the doctor my own history as far as I knew it, and talked to him about Madame and the school. He encouraged me to talk, and he was so kind that I could not fancy him inquisitive. He professed himself much interested in my future prospects, and begged I would command him if he could be of any service to me. I was not as thankful as I ought to have been for the kindness that everyone showed me; but I was stunned and stupid and hardly knew what was going on around me sometimes.

Mrs. Paine busied herself about getting mourning for me, and found a cunning dress-maker who arranged a toilette for me that I might appear at my mother's funeral in suitable black. I was so stupid that I really think I should have taken no care about it but for the thought and kindness of the housekeeper, who, I was glad to learn, was to take my mother's place.

Even old Pierre, the man who had come to the boat to meet Charles Legrange and myself, was full of praises for my dead mother. She seemed to have been kind and genial to every one but me, her child, who would have loved her very dearly if she would have allowed me to do so. Pierre walked a mile to take my letters to the post, and told me he would have gone twenty for me for her sake; she had been so good to him, he said.

The week wore wearily by between the day of my mother's death and the one appointed for her funeral. Dr. Legrange had arranged to have it earlier, but he was called away unexpectedly to see a new patient and I would not hear of its taking place without him. Somehow he seemed all I had to cling to now in my desolation, and his unavoidable absence for a couple of days made a chilling gap in the household.

He returned on the evening before the day of the funeral, and took me into his study again, and under his protecting wing, masking me feel as if the world were not quite so desolate as it seemed.

"Have you read the papers yet, my dear?" he asked.

"No," I replied, "I cannot while—while—"

"I understand, not till after to-morrow," he replied, kindly. "It is very natural; you will remain with us for a time when all is over? You have no fixed plans?"

"I have no plans at all," I said, sadly. "It has all been so sudden I have had no time to think."

"Then take it—here at Navarre House; you shall have the room that was your mother's and anything that I can do to help you, short of leaving my people to take care of themselves, I shall be only too happy to do."

"You are very kind," I said, "but I must not trespass on your time. I have no claim."

"You have the claim of necessity," he said, quietly; "and a higher one still. You are her daughter, and for her sake I would serve you if I could. She was more than an assistant to me, she was a friend, and a valued one; her death will be a great loss to me."

Always the same! Everyone but me. I think the doctor guessed what was passing in my mind, for he changed the subject of our conversation, and began to talk about the arrangements for the morrow.

"I was quite astonished to find that quite a number of people from the outside were going to follow my mother to her last resting-place; she had made herself thoroughly

loved and respected during her residence on the island."

"You will like the place," he said; "our cemetery is one of the prettiest spots we have, and that is as it should be. There is something so odious in the notion of a desolate, uncared-for burying-ground. You will leave your mother under the shadow of waving trees, and with flowers flinging their petals on her as they, too, die and give place to other things."

He was right; the corner where I saw my mother's coffin lowered to its final resting-place was as pretty a nook as could well be imagined. The air was full of the scent of flowers, and musical with the song of birds, as the words were spoken over my mother's resting-place that the Church ordains shall attend the burying of our dead. The splash of the waves on the beach came to my ears as I stood listening in dull sorrow to the rattle of the earth upon the coffin lid, and the silvery sound and the sight of the blue expanse, with the white sails flitting over it under the bright sunlight, seemed to speak more to me of rest and peace than even the beautiful burial service with its foreshadowing of the world within the veil.

And so back to Navarre House and the strange loneliness that comes after all is over and our dead buried out of our sight; and I sat down in the little room that had been my mother's, all altered and arranged for my use while I had been away, and set myself resolutely to think of the future and what I should do in it after I had read what my mother had left for me in the hands of Dr. Legrange.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD.

The doctor bade me adieu at the door of my room that night after we had laid my mother in her last resting-place, and recommended me to try and sleep.

"Don't think of anything till to-morrow," he said, gently; "the future will look brighter when you have recruited your bodily strength, and you will want all your energies to face the world with; not that you need face it yet, my dear," he added, kindly. "If you will stay with us for a while we shall be very happy to have you for as long as you like. There is plenty of room here, and one, more or less, makes no difference."

I thanked him, but said I should try as soon as I could to make my own way; it had to be done, and it would be better not to taste the luxury of idleness first.

"It shall be as you will," he said, smiling, and pressing my hand; "only rest while you are here, my child, and be sure that if I can help you in any way after you leave us I will do it. Put all disquieting thoughts away from you and sleep."

I promised—but it was easier said than done. Whether the image of my mother was too present with me, or the agitation and surprise had not worn off yet, I do not know, but do what I could I could not feel alone; my mother seemed to be with me all the while, whispering to me to open the packet and read her last injunctions, and prepare myself for obedience to her wishes.

Weary of trying, at last I got up and struck a light, and throwing on my dressing-gown I sat down at the toilet-table and took out the packet. Perhaps it was unwise of me to have taken that room, thoughtless of them to have put me in it. The association was almost painful; my mother seemed to be standing at my elbow, and I could hear the low, angry whispers in which she had spoken to me of her wrongs, and with trembling fingers I tore open the parcel. I almost felt as if I should see her if I delayed any longer; and my nerves were strung up to such a pitch of tension that I don't think I should have been surprised if I had actually beheld her.

The packet contained a long letter addressed to myself and about half-a-dozen others

besides other papers. I put down my own and hastily glanced at the letters, which were old and faded, and all signed alike, simply "Edgar." There was no other name, nothing to tell the rank or status of the writer, but I instinctively felt that the writer was a gentleman, not only in standing, but in thought and feeling. They were well expressed, and written in a clear hand, not clerical, but with much character in it, and were all addressed to "Miss St. Clair."

That, then, had been my mother's maiden name—it might be some guide to me in finding out more about her. The letters were all in the same strain, apparently combating her objections to their marriage; objections on the score of difference of position—she being poor, and only a governess, receiving a fair salary, but not sufficient to entitle her to look forward to a marriage with such a man as this Edgar Dunsford seemed to have been.

I laid down the last of the letters with a new and curious feeling regarding my unknown father. I felt that he must have changed very much after his marriage to become the monster my mother had painted him. But men do change, and the lover of one year may become the tyrannical husband of the next. My father had altered, I supposed; and I took up my mother's letter to myself, with a sigh, and read it carefully two or three times.

It was closely and carefully written; the erasures and corrections showed what thought and time had been bestowed upon it; it was no hasty effusion dashed off in the heat of passion and breathing a revenge arising from some offence of a moment; it was bitter and vindictive, and evidently written under the pressure of a great wrong.

It commenced abruptly, without any word of endearment or tenderness, and every line of it seemed to burn itself into my brain by the time I had gone over it twice.

"Should you ever read this," it began, "I shall be beyond your power to question as to my motives in keeping you in ignorance so long of your actual relationship to me, and the cause that led to such a determination on my part. Should I survive until you are of legal age I shall myself fulfil the task which otherwise I bequeath to you, my daughter; and when you understand how bitterly I have been wronged, and how cruelly I was betrayed, you will not be slow to accept the legacy."

Here followed the story which she had told me, in fewer words, in the little time I was with her before she died, the tale of her brief happiness and her sudden discovery of my father's perfidy and his cousin's ingratitude. A tale that made my heart beat and my blood boil as I read it, and which strengthened me in my resolution to do the bidding of the mother I had only known as such to lose for ever. I laid down the letter to wipe the tears that rose to my eyes, and took it up again with a resolve in my heart to do all that I had promised, and to avenge to the utmost my mother's wrongs. It went on in a passionate strain that I could hardly associate with what I remembered of my mother's reserved and quiet manner and her seeming insensibility to all emotion.

"Robbed by another of what was mine by right, I have sworn to be revenged, if not in my own person, through the child who was as deeply wronged as I was myself; and who so fit as my daughter to carry out my purpose? Believing in my death—for I took care that a false report to that effect should reach him—the man, who, after winning my love cast it aside like a worthless toy, married the pale-faced doll, for whose waxy beauty he had forgotten my dark face and cast me aside. He was wary, and was not in too great a hurry; they were too cunning to give the world occasion for scandal or slander the slightest opportunity for remark. Hypocrite as he was, your father made a tremendous parade of grief for my loss, and completely hoodwinked every one who would have cared to avenge me had they known the truth."

"The steamer *Eurydice*, in which I sailed

to New York was wrecked just at the end of her passage, and a great many of the passengers were drowned. I had resumed my maiden name, and in that name was set down amongst the dead. It was some time before I saw it or knew anything about it, for the shock brought on an illness, and for some months I did not think I should recover. Before I was able to do anything for myself you were born, and I had heard how I was supposed to be dead, by accident, in England; and how my rival was keeping her place by my husband's side, looked upon by the world as the future Mrs. Dunsford. I vowed in my heart that she should be Mrs. Dunsford if he chose to make her so, and that I would have sure and bitter revenge at some future day. I knew in my heart how my husband must have rejoiced at his freedom when I heard that he had been some time married to my hated rival. How I rejoiced then, for I knew my revenge was certain. Do you see how? He knows nothing of your birth, and his whole soul is wrapped up in his base-born son, whom he fondly imagines to be his heir. That could not be, even if you were not in existence, for his marriage with that woman is illegal, and you, the daughter of the wife he so bitterly wronged, will take the name and place of his idol. I may not live to see it, sometimes I think I shall not. I think that even in my grave I shall have the consciousness that my revenge is accomplished, by your hands, if not by my own. And you will not fail me, Magdalene? I feel you will not, now that you know the bitter cause I have to lay this task upon you. I charge you on the duty you owe to me who gave you birth, to seek out the man who betrayed me, and shattered my life, when you are of age and the law will leave you free of his control, and claim your inheritance. Assert your rights and the memory of mine, and strip the usurper of my place in my husband's heart of her stolen honours. Have no pity on the man whom it is your misfortune to call father; have none on her and those belonging to her, who have robbed you all the years that you have lived. Remember only my wrongs and your own as I have done, and shall do in my grave; and let no miserable compassion turn you from the fulfilment of the mission I bequeath."

There was a great deal more to the same purpose, for the letter occupied six sheets of closely-written paper, but I turned it over and over again in vain to find some mention of who or what my father was. There was his name occurring several times in my mother's passionate story of grief and wrong, but nothing that was any clue to what I wanted to know: where to find him, and how to set about what she had laid upon me.

Perhaps Dr. Legrange might know, he had been in the secret of the relationship between my mother and me, and she might have made him her confidant in more than that one fact. I would ask him in the morning, and in the meantime I would look over the other papers that the parcel had contained. There was the certificate of the marriage of my parents, Edgar Dunsford, described as of England, and Suzanne St. Clair, set down as of New York, and the register of my birth in an obscure street in New York. I was set down as "Magdalene St. Clair Dunsford, daughter of Edgar and Suzanne Dunsford," and there was a note appended to it in my mother's handwriting, stating that I had been baptised at her bedside when we were both so ill that it was a question whether either, or both, would ever get well again.

I turned from these papers with a curious feeling of distrust to my father's letters. I had never known what passionate love or burning jealousy meant in those peaceful days. Such things had not come nigh us at Wassenhauser, and it was strange and terrible to read the outpouring of his heart when he was courting my mother, and then to know how soon those vows of constancy and eternal truth were thrown to the winds when his errant fancy fixed itself upon another woman.

"You need not doubt me, my darling," he

wrote in the latest dated of the few letters under my hand, "I come of a race that is loyal to men and true to women; we Dunsfords do not lie, and you will be as dear to me when we have gone down the hill hand-in-hand, and are waiting for the grim boatman to ferry us across, as you are now in the very heyday of our love."

In another of later date, at least I judged so, as not one bore anything more definite as to time than the day of the week, there were a few lines of tender reproach for my mother's lack of confidence in the writer's sincerity, at which he evidently felt deeply hurt, referring to it in such words of manly dignity and wounded pride as made me more than ever utterly at a loss to reconcile the nobility of character, and steadfast purpose they indicated, with the baseness of his after conduct.

"Your doubts," he wrote, "do injustice, both to yourself and me, an injustice which, if you do not strive to overcome it, is likely to wreck all my hopes of happiness; and if I read your heart aright, and I think I do my own, yours also, I tell you again, darling, you are, and ever will be, dearer to me than any other woman upon earth. But unless you can trust me with all your heart, it would indeed be better to part. I can hardly bear to write the words, I cannot think calmly of acting upon them, and yet I should be no man if I did not speak plainly after your last letter, which has given me more grief than I can express.

"As for your fears of meeting with a cold reception from my family, they are totally unfounded; and even were it otherwise, I trust I should know how to protect my wife from the very worst annoyance that you could picture to yourself. You would have had no cause for fear, my darling, if I had acted the Lord of Burleigh for awhile, as I was half inclined to do. But how could I demand trust while using concealment myself? The contingency of which I spoke and so aroused your fears is one so remote, so unlikely to happen in any case, that it is hardly worth thinking of. Or should the 'whirligig of time' hold such an event in store, I have no more doubt of myself than I have of your perfect fitness to assume the responsibilities it would bring in its train."

There was only one letter after this, written in evident high spirits, on the eve of their wedding-day; and with a strange turmoil of feelings in my heart, I tried to steady my thoughts sufficiently to piece together the fragments of information I had gleaned from the perusal.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was a problem to which nothing in my experience afforded the slightest clue, and the more I considered it the more incomprehensible appeared. That men sin and women suffer wrongs most undeserved I knew; and that only too often, alas! the axiom is reversed, I was also aware even then.

Had there not crept once over the quiet seclusion of our life at Wassenhauser, the shadow of a tragedy, which destroyed a happy home and brought sorrow and shame on the gayest and brightest of the girl students there? Her father, a well-born honourable gentleman, high in the service of his king, had forgotten duty, honour, the claims of his family, and a pure wife's devoted love, for a false woman's falser smiles; and after squandering his modest fortune in the vain attempts to satisfy her extravagant demands, took shelter in the coward's stronghold, and sought refuge in a suicide's grave from the execration of all who knew him on earth.

Poor Ermengild Von Wildeshein! I remember even now, how the light died out of her sparkling eyes when the terrible news came, leaving them expressionless of all but sorrow. And how her laughing voice, that had ever been so musical, and so full of gladness, took a piteous ring, that made our hearts ache when we listened in vain for the merry sound of the old music.

But neither the recollection of this, nor other stories of man's wrongdoing, and the misery it entails upon its innocent victims, afforded me any help now in my endeavour to reconcile the heartless conduct of my father to his wife, with the sentiments expressed in the letters that lay before me. Judged solely by their evidences, I must deem him worthy not only a daughter's respect, but the love and esteem of all who knew him; and yet he had lied to the woman he was trying to lure away from her country and her home, and had wronged so basely, with so little effort to conceal his infidelity, as to drive her to flight in the first months of their union.

What could I do? I asked myself. How could I find this man and work the revenge my mother had bidden me seek? It was a curious charge to lay upon a girl; a strange burden with which to begin a lonely life and a battle with the world. Who would help me in it? There was no mention of friends or relatives in my mother's papers; if she had any, they were, doubtless, in America, and would be strangers to me, even if I could find them, and of that I had small hope.

But the attempt must at least be made, I told myself. It was my duty to redress the wrong my mother had sustained. In the dim watches of that silent night it seemed to me as if my mother's spirit was hovering near me, impelling me to see everything as she had seen it, and to resolve to do as she would have me at any sacrifice. I seemed to feel her breath upon my cheek, and to hear her voice whispering in my ear, prompting me to all that was revengeful and harsh in my future dealings with the people who had supplanted her.

I had never really loved my mother, even with the affection of a niece; she had kept me so much away from her; and yet now that she was gone, and I knew the relationship that had existed between us, I desired to avenge her wrongs on my unknown father, as cordially as though I had known her and loved her with all a daughter's love.

I was her child—I bore her name; and in this at least I had come suddenly to resemble her—the desire to make my father smart for the wrong-doing of those bygone days. I seemed to live another life there in the dark hours of the night, and to change my nature altogether, as I thought over what I had promised, and planned how it best could be accomplished.

I had read and re-read the papers till every word seemed to dance before my excited eyes in fiery letters, trying in vain to find some clue to guide me, some little word to tell me who and what the man was whom I was to seek, but all to no purpose. Edgar Danstord, that was all! There was no description of him; and I fell to trying to guess what he was like, as I sat there beside the bed, on which my mother had died, and remembered her pale, stern face as she told me the secret of my life.

I pictured her to myself a girl as I was, friendless as I was, perhaps, and working for her bread, as it was evident she did from the tenor of the letters from the man who had used her so cruelly. I could guess at the meeting with the traveller, for such I judged my father to have been. An idle man, maybe, with plenty of money, who had seen her by accident and fallen in love with her beauty.

She must have been very beautiful, my poor mother. Her face as she lay in her coffin with all the anger and revenge smoothed out of it by the icy touch of death, showed eminently handsome features, regular and somewhat sharply defined, but singularly beautiful in outline. Her eyes were dark and piercing, and as the closed lids covered them in her last long sleep, the dark lashes swept the cheeks beneath, and rested like a fringe on the soft skin.

She had never struck me as being handsome than the common run of women. When I had believed her to be my aunt, I had regarded her from a child's point of view, which makes everything lovely that is kind and motherly.

She had always been stern and uncompromising to the last degree, always an avenger rather than a merciful guide. I had always been doing wrong, it seemed to me, in my retrospect of my childhood; so few of my days had been without punishment of some sort or another. No wonder I did not think her lovely, or, indeed, ever look into her face with criticising eyes at all.

She dressed oddly, too, up to the time of her going to Navarre House,—the coarsest stuffs and the plainest of caps were always her costume. So that she was clean and neat and she was scrupulously particular in this respect, she did not care about her personal appearance at all. She had been different since she came to Jersey; Dr. Legrange had intimated to her that she must make some change; and the dresses that were hanging in her wardrobe—my property now—were all good, some of them costly.

I could quite understand her having been just the sort of girl to take a young man's fancy, if he admired statuette beauty. I gathered from the general tone of my father's letters to her, and the allusions that he made to things and people, that he was travelling for his own amusement when he met her and took her back with him to his native country. And I pictured their happiness as I sat musing, and thought what a prospect must have opened to the lonely orphan girl, for I felt assured on that point; there was no mention of any friends of hers anywhere. And how deliciously happy she must have felt when "she gave her hand with her heart in it" to the man of her choice.

Oh, what a world of happiness there must be in this love, I thought, when a woman would give up everything she held dear for it. Could I ever do as my mother had done, and give my heart to another's keeping? I had never been tried—perhaps I might. Yes, surely, if the man who begged it of me was—Pahaw! What nonsense I was thinking! What had I to do with the recollection of a manly face, and a hand-clasp that I should never forget? It was all nonsense, and yet I caught myself thinking of Hugh Meredyth as I sat there with my mother's legacy of revenge and hate spread out before me. I was back again at Wassenbauer; and the moonlight that was playing on the floor was sending a flood of thoughts through my brain of the happy days I had spent there; days gone beyond recall now, and all the fresh girl-hood of my nature with them.

The dear old days—how they came crowding upon me! Madame with her dear, warm heart, and her odd ways, and her Martinet style of governing, at which we rebelled sometimes, but to which she always found means to make us submit. I thought of my school-fellows with a longing pain at my heart, as I remembered I should see them no more—of dear Dorothy, and my musical rival Olga Rosenbaum. She was going out as a governess, so she confided to me one day as a great secret. Her parents kept up a good appearance, but they had much ado to make two ends meet, and she was to go out—a long way from home, of course, for it would never do to have it known that she was earning her own living.

To England very likely, she said; and then I fell to wondering whether in the governess world we two should ever meet again. And then my thoughts strayed to the examination, and Lord St. Columb's odd question when he first saw me, "Who is she? Where does she come from?" and then, too, the kindly notice, he and his party had taken of me; and then back to Hugh Meredyth. Oh, if I had only such a friend as he to help me through what lay before me! The very recollection of the clasp of his hand—our hands had met once for a second or two—seemed to give promise of something so reliable; something a woman would like to take all her troubles to. And his eyes were so truthful, so—Bah! What an idiot I was. What an inconceivably vain and stupid creature, to think like this of a person

I had only seen once, and in all probability should never see again.

But the remembrance would come. The recollection of the look that flashed from out those pleasant brown eyes into mine, as I passed up on to the platform, where I was to play my chorale; and the cordial congratulation of his two or three words to me afterwards, would not be put away; and I sat dreaming a pleasant foolish dream, till the moonlight suddenly disappeared, and a shivering gust of wind seemed almost to rush through the room, as it whirled howling amongst the trees outside.

A hollow moan seemed to come from the waves on the beach, as though they were being forced by a compelling power to begin some work of ruin and destruction. And the water that I had seen gleaming, not a minute before suddenly went out of sight in the darkness, and left only a dull, booming sound suggestive of storm, desolation, to tell where the shore that had looked so lovely in the moonlight lay.

The wind roared by the windows so dismal that I shivered with a vague apprehension, born of my long self-communing, and I hastily drew down the blind, for I had been sitting with it up till now, and prepared to seek my bed, mind and body thoroughly wearied out with the mental strain I had undergone.

But before I laid my head upon my pillow I knelt and offered up a prayer that in the time that lay before me my purpose might be accomplished. That in the days to come I might fulfil the revenge enjoined upon me by my dead mother, and bring punishment as heavy as the offence which had provoked it on the head of him, my other parent, whose treachery had so richly deserved it.

It was a sinful, wicked wish, for which I have since sought pardon, but I had forgotten then who it is that says "vengeance is mine," and with the prayer upon my lips, and the vow of revenge so filling my every thought, that not even the haunting remembrance of Hugh Meredyth's handsome face and kindly eyes could find room in my mind, I fell into a troubled dream-burdened sleep at last; but not till some time after the first grey light of dawn had stolen ghost-like in slowly and coldly through the long casement opposite the foot of my bed.

(To be continued.)

As regards to the discontinuance of the plumed bonnet worn by the Highland regiments for the last hundred years, it is stated that the War Office authorities have definitely decided that this becoming head-gear shall be no more seen. According to present arrangements, the flowing Highland garb is to be surmounted by an ugly helmet, a contrast that will prove as absurd as the change is needless. What would Sir Colin Campbell say?—he who led the Highlanders up the deadly slopes of Alma, and therefore wore the Highland bonnet in remembrance of that glorious day.—Society.

UNIQUE and charming dresses were those worn by Miss Eyre's four bridesmaids, which were composed of amber and black satin, bonnets *en tête*, and each young lady wore a pearl and diamond brooch, the gift of the bridegroom, Mr. R. Pryor. The bride's dress was of ivory satin, trimmed with embroidered lace, and a fringe of pearls, a tulle veil fastened with diamonds. A very handsome bridal dress was that of Miss Baird; which was of brocaded velvet, the petticoat being of white satin, trimmed with Carrickmacross lace, chenille fringe and ostrich feathers. Her wreath of natural orange blossoms was covered by a tulle veil attached to the hair by a diamond swallow. The three children bridesmaids were charmingly attired in white plush, trimmed with swansdown, overskirts of white Surah, and plush "granny" bonnets; each wore a pearl and coral daisy brooch presented by the bridegroom, Major Chalmers.

A DOUBLE RESCUE.

"Yes, Marian, if you love me, prove it by meeting me under the old oak tree, the other side of the village of Birtley, when we will go at once to the pariah clerk's, and see about putting up the banns."

He completed the sentence with a kiss.

Marian blushed crimson, her bosom heaved, and there was a half-smile playing round her cheery lips; at the same time there were tears in her eyes.

"Frank," she said, "is this not hasty? I would rather you gave me time to make preparations."

He looked displeased.

"Perhaps your heart tells you are going against your inclinations," said Frank Farleigh, gloomily; "perhaps, in short, Willie Greville has made such an impression on you that your feelings towards me have changed."

The speaker was a tall, handsome, but dark-looking young man of twenty-five, representing himself as a lawyer, who had for a year past been rather steadily visiting Marian Vere, a beautiful young lady, the daughter of a wealthy merchant residing in the village of St. Mildred's.

On the present occasion she and Farleigh were strolling through a grove about a quarter of a mile from her father's mansion, and equally as far from the house of Willie Greville, a rich young farmer, who lived on the other side of the grove, and who had lately become one of Marian's suitors.

Farleigh, unfortunately, was of a rather jealous disposition, and was constantly haunted with the fear that during his absence Greville would gain an advantage over him as his rival.

"Frank," said Marian, in answer to his last remark, "how often have I assured you that Mr. Greville can never be more to me than a friend? As the friend of my father, I must, of course, treat him civilly."

"Your father favours him, at all events," said Farleigh.

"To tell the truth, I think he does; but that can matter nothing to me. Moreover, he would not attempt to influence my choice, as he has always said that his child should choose for herself. Still, Frank, I would ask you to give me a little time."

"I leave for London in a week or two," answered Frank; "and that is why I am in so great a hurry to have our union take place."

"Be it so, then," she answered, blushing scarlet.

As she spoke a deep sigh escaped her.

Frank heard it with uneasiness; but, determined not to show the feeling, this time he kissed her good-bye, and they parted, with the understanding that Marian should meet her lover at nine o'clock on the following morning under the old oak tree the other side of the village of Birtley.

At half-past eight the next morning Marian started.

Greville had called the evening before, and had actually proposed to her, when she had frankly told him that she could never feel anything but friendship towards him, as she loved another.

He had gone away looking so miserable that Marian had sincerely pitied him, while, knowing that there was a taint of insanity in his family, she had feared that he might destroy himself.

It was this fear which had made her sigh, on the evening before, when she gave her consent to Frank's proposal, for she had a kind heart, and could deeply pity those towards whom she was otherwise indifferent.

The distance to the village of Birtley was about a mile, and there was but one house on the way. This part of the country was very lonely, containing fields and thickets, which were seldom visited.

The house alluded to stood near the edge of a small grove. It was a small, two-story cottage, round which Marian at this time could discern no sign of a human being.

At length, however, she heard the cry of a child, and presently saw a little girl, about four years old, run out and stood watching her as she was about to pass the house.

"How do you do, little Gertie?" said Marian, kindly, for she knew the child and her parents. "And how are papa and mamma?"

"Very well," said the little girl, standing on tiptoe. "But papa and mamma have gone away to Birtley, and won't be back till night, and they have left me to take care of the house."

Marian shrugged her shoulders, thinking that the parents were very careless to leave such a wee thing all alone.

"Do you think it will rain?" inquired Gertie, looking up at the sky.

"I think it will, soon," answered Marian.

"I am so glad," replied the little girl; "for our cistern is almost dry, and the rain may fill it up again."

Marian, glancing up at the clouds gathering along the sky, was about hurrying along, fearful of being caught in a shower, when she saw the child run to the cistern and peer down into it.

She leaned so far over that Marian uttered a cry of affright, and was about warning her, when over went little Gertie headlong into the cistern.

Marian, trembling with fear, rushed into the yard, and looking down into the cavity discovered to her horror that Gertie was drowning, there being three feet of water in the cavity—enough to cover the head of a child of her stature.

Without a moment's hesitation Marian let herself down into the cistern—a distance of nine feet.

She caught up Gertie and held her in her arms, shouting with all her might, faintly hoping that some person might be passing and hear her.

Finally the little girl regained her breath.

"It will rain, and we shall both be drowned," she gasped. "When the water comes, it pours very fast into the cistern."

Marian glanced round her at the smooth, cemented sides of the cavity, and saw no way of getting out.

At the same moment she felt a few drops of rain fall upon her face through the opening above.

What should she do?

There seemed no possible way of escape.

Fortunately, there was a board in the cistern, upon which she could station the little girl, holding on to her in the meantime.

The board, however, was far too short to be made available for getting out of the place.

The rain commenced to fall faster. Marian continued to shout, but there was no response; and now the drops were heard patterning fast upon the ground above.

Soon the water began to trickle through the spout leading into the cistern.

The stream grew larger every moment, and the noise it made falling into the cistern sounded like a knell upon the ears of the poor girl.

It was, indeed, fearful to see that stream coming down, rapidly increasing the depth of the water.

Soon it was up to Marian's waist. She clutched her cries—still in vain. There was no response save the dismal patterning of the rain and the sighing of the wind through the trees.

Little Gertie began to cry with affright, while both she and her companion shivered with cold.

Marian, although her own heart beat loud and fast with terror, endeavoured to soothe the little one.

A more trying situation than theirs can hardly be imagined, for the water, steadily rising, must in a short time reach over Marian's head.

Suddenly a thought struck her.

If she could only get up high enough to stop up the spout-hole, they might be saved.

But how could she do this?

The hole of the spout was at least three feet above her.

She looked at Gertie.

By raising the child in her arms could it not reach the spout and stuff something in it.

She gave the little one the necessary instructions, then pulled the shawl from her shoulders, and putting it in the child's hands, she raised her in her arms.

Gertie stuffed the shawl in the earthen spout, and this stopped the water from coming.

"We are saved!" exclaimed the young lady, covering her with kisses.

"Yes, and papa and mamma will come soon and take us out," answered the delighted child.

Marian again began to shout, doing so until she was so hoarse that she could not utter another word.

About a quarter of an hour had passed, when suddenly both were startled by a report like that of a cannon, when, to her dismay, Marian perceived that the rushing peat-up water gathering in the earthen spout had caused it to burst.

The situation of the twain was now even more perilous than before, for the water now poured into the cistern with redoubled velocity, and in a larger stream than it did ere the cistern was stopped up.

Gertie, clinging to Marian, shrieked with terror; but the young woman, procuring her shawl, gave it to the little girl, and, soothed her, again raised her in her arms to stop up the new opening.

"Alas! Gertie was unable to thrust the shawl into the aperture, owing to the added force of the water, which now came so as to thrust away the impediment as fast as it was placed.

"Heaven help us!" murmured Marian, obliged to abandon the attempt.

And the unobstructed water, hissing and gurgling, poured faster and faster into the cistern, till poor Marian found herself submerged to her neck.

She glanced up, despairingly, but could see no sign of the cessation of the rain, and she gave herself up as lost.

Silently she prayed Heaven to give her strength to meet her impending fate like a Christian; but she trembled with terror even while she prayed.

Higher and higher rose the water.

Soon it was up to her chin, and she could now scarcely keep upon her feet.

Only a few minutes more between her and eternity.

Meanwhile, almost overpowered with fear, she endeavoured to keep the little girl upon the board.

The child was now so frightened that she was as pale as death, while her eyes, rolling in her head, seemed to threaten spasms.

The water rising higher, was nearly to Marian's lips.

Still she held on to the little girl, struggling to keep her in her place.

Meanwhile she made one last effort to make herself heard; but her cries were almost smothered by the rising water.

Up! up! still up!

Now it was over her lips, ringing and hissing in her ears, and she felt that she must drown.

Impulsively she clutched the board, but, perceiving that it was not heavy enough to bear her weight, and that she would thus draw the child under, she let go her hold, bidding the little one cling to the board, and she, at least, would be saved.

Marian then sank beneath the surface, giving herself up for lost.

As she went under, however, she felt something brush against her.

The next moment she was seized and drawn out of the water, and up through the cistern, in an almost fainting condition.

She opened her eyes to find herself and Gertie safe in the cottage.

The little girl's parents had come back.

sooner than they had expected to do, and hearing Marian's cries, had got to the cistern just in time to save her by means of a ladder, which the man thrust into the cavity.

Dry garments were now provided Marian. "There's quite an excitement in Birtley this morning," said the woman, "over the arrest of a person you know—Mr. Farleigh."

"What?" gasped Marian. "Why was he arrested?"

"Well, it has turned out that he was a mere sharper and adventurer, and no lawyer, as he has represented. He was arrested for forgery and embezzlement. He has been carrying on an ingenious system of swindling for many years."

Marian heard no more, but fell down in a swoon.

For weeks she lay in a brain fever, and for months after was so weak that she was expected to live.

Meanwhile, undisputed proof of Frank's guilt having been advanced, he was sentenced to a lengthened term of imprisonment.

Day after day Mr. Vere, watching his daughter, saw her grow paler and thinner.

He had said, when he learned the affair of the cistern, that there was no evil without good; for this had saved her from marrying the scoundrel Farleigh. But his heart sank to see his poor child gradually fading before him.

Thanks to a good constitution, however, she recovered, but was never as light-hearted as formerly.

After a time Willie Greville renewed his suit, and this time with more success, though the first love of her young heart had been given to Frank Farleigh; but she is happy enough in her husband and children's love, and all who know her admire and respect her.

THINKING OVER IT TWICE.

We are such impressionable beings that neither young men nor maidens should, as a rule, do anything before thinking twice over it. Sweethearts, into which maidenhood and adolescent manliness glides as naturally as ducks take to water, needs this sort of carefulness much more than anything else.

It is easy to take a situation, to change the place of residence, to build up a scheme, or to do a dozen other serious matters. If failure comes, failure can be borne. Sweethearts are generally irrevocable. The careless kisses and pretty walks glide on to marriage.

Once afloat on the Niagara of courtship, people rush down a current which is irresistible. And then the rude awakening comes. Little temper and little faults creep in through the cracks in an ill-assorted union.

Household cares prevent the wife from being as tidy as she once was, and business frets rub the husband the wrong way. Nobody is perfect, but forbearance and love do much to soften the irritable, hard edges of existence.

If people whose every taste and hope is dissimilar, have chosen each other blindly for the co-partnership "which is for better or for worse," then the rest of life is only the latter, never sees a glimpse of the former, and frequently ends in social disaster.

"Think over it twice." A party leads to an introduction and a Sunday walk. An introduction to mutual friends follows. Then a proposal and engagement. And all this time Cupid has been playing his deadly game with people who have seen each other only in their Sunday clothes and company manners.

When the young couple are face to face with a household care or two which can equal all night, and sometimes does so—when the fresh-complexioned girl gets pale and wan—when things go awry at the counting-house and there is a wet washing-day at home, company manners fly away.

It is never too late to think over it twice while everything has to be done. To think over it twice when everything has been done is to try to wrestle with the laws of gravitation. When all is settled it is too late to attempt to begin again at the start.

A COMMON SOLDIER.

I know a soldier brave, who ne'er
A uniform hath worn,
Or high o'er carnage helped to bear
A standard battle-torn;
Who, scorning praise that must be won
By violence and strife,
Hath yet a hero proved upon
The battle-field of life.
From leaguering foes scarce once exempt
His firm career hath been,
With many a treacherous voice to tempt
The citadel within;
First of a widowed mother lone
The youthful champion he,
And then, to sturdier stature grown,
Of wife and child'red three;
With naught to turn Fate's evil stroke,
Or Mishap's levelled lance,
Save good right arm and heart of oak,
The tyrant, Circumstance,
This humble knight hath vanquished sore
By hard knocks given and ta'en,
As erst did Cid Campeador
The Moorish chiefs of Spain.
In Duty's lists, in Labour's wars,
This knight hath emprise found;
And now, with honourable scars
And highest conquest crowned—
That of himself—and thus at last,
By Holy Writ, more great
Than he who takes a city vast,
The master of his fate;
Unto his castle safe retired,
His love-girt cottage hearth,
Throned by good men's esteem, and fired
By that best wish on earth
To aid the weak, to shield when down
The blind, the halt, the lame,
What boots it, then—Smith, Jones or Brown—
The noble victor's name?

N. D.

YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

CHAPTER X.

"THE VICTIM OF FOLY."

"Sit down," said General Forrester, pointing to a chair, and at the same time eyeing his niece curiously, "I shall not keep you long."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when there came a resounding crash from the room on the opposite side of the landing which was the General's own dressing-room, and a splashing as of a monstrous bird thrown into water. Sibyl nearly bounded out of her chair, wondering if it could be the Major come to grief in his wanderings in a strange house; but her uncle only frowned, and, annoyed at his own involuntary start, muttered:

"That idiot Mary tumbling over a can!"

Then he cleared his throat, settled his tie, drew himself up to his full height, which was not much above five feet nine, and began in his usual unmusical tone:

"Wentworth is down stairs."

She clasped her hands tight, and every scrap of colour left her face. It only required this to make her martyrdom complete.

"I imagine someone has taken the trouble to investigate our domestic affairs, and make them public. There is a proverb about washing your dirty linen at home, but it has been disregarded, and that which is enough to make your poor father rise from his grave has been published right and left through the neighbourhood. I don't know if you thought it was the best way of exciting public compassion?"

"I do not want compassion," throwing back her head, scornfully; "and I only wish that I were dead, that no one might hear of me again!"

"Humph! more tragic than true. If you wanted to be so retiring, why did you proclaim

your disgrace upon the house tops?" with a slight sneer.

"I never did. I have been a prisoner for ever so long; you seem to forget it."

"Prisoners can write."

"Others can, but I had no one to write to."

"Not even Wentworth?—a man whom you have known for a twelvemonth?"

"I never wrote to him in my life!" her cheeks growing crimson, as in a moment it flashed like a vision through her brain—that meeting at the gate, when his lips had touched her cheek, and their hearts seemed to beat to the same measure!

"Nor sent him a message?"

"No!"

"Then someone else did," frowning hard in his perplexity; "and the outcome of it all is that Lord Wentworth wishes to know if you would like to share his home for the future."

Sibyl opened her eyes in the greatest surprise.

"Well, what is your answer?" snapped the General.

"Of course I should!" a gleam of joy shining in her eyes. "There's nothing on earth I should like better."

"And you think yourself fit to go to Wentworth Chase, when I tell you that I do not consider you worthy to remain at Coombe Lodge?"

"Certainly I do!" with calm dignity. It lasted but for a moment, and her lip quivered. It was such joy to find that Dudley had not forgotten her. Though he had met her so coldly at the door of the church he had been caring for her, and thinking of her interests all the while.

"I—I—thank him from the bottom of my heart," she said, brokenly, whilst the tears ran down her cheeks.

"I think you ought to," said the General, drily.

There was a knock at the door.

"Please, sir, Major Lushington is downstairs, and wants to speak to you very particularly," said Priscilla, standing in the doorway, like a sentinel.

"At this time of night?"

"It's very particular, the gentleman says."

"Show him into the library."

Then turning to Sibyl,—

"Do you know anything of this? Have you sent for him?"

"No," standing up in great agitation. "And I wish to heavens he had not come!"

"Leave him to me, and I'll soon send him about his business;" and the General walked out of the room, with a ferocious expression on his sunburnt face; whilst the girl, utterly overcome, threw herself down on the sofa, and sobbed aloud—great tearless sobs, from a heart that was nearly breaking. How could she bear to face her life, if the present were to be the picture of the future? Dudley, the man she loved, close within reach, yet separated from her by a barrier of her own making! Lushington, the man she feared, whether near or far, bound to her by a tie which, for honour's sake, she dared not break! One she could have followed alone and unprotected to the farthest ends of the earth without fear for her spotless innocence; whilst as to the other, she knew but little of him, and an instinct told her that she could not trust that little. One was the soul of honour, and even a stranger would have felt it safe to trust him, after one look into his honest eyes; the other might be, only it was not written in indelible characters across his face, that all might read.

Wentworth had been for a year the perfect realisation of her girlish ideal, Lushington only a passing fancy, born of vanity and caprice; and yet, through her own unmitigated folly, and a boy's treachery, she must turn her eyes for ever from the one, and give her hand and plighted troth to the other. Was ever any girl so utterly miserable before?

"Sibyl, where are you? Such a lark!" and Phil crept noiselessly into the room. "Hallo!" catching sight of the limp form on the sofa. "Are you ill, is anything up?"

"No," sitting up, and brushing back her hair, "only everything's gone wrong."

"Gone wrong? Poor little Belle," patting her on the back, as he sat down on the head of the sofa. "Never mind, it will be all right in a second. Trust Lushington for that! I say, you should have seen him."

"Why did you take away the ladder?" suddenly remembering the anxiety it had caused her.

"Because Wentworth came down the drive. He nearly caught us as it was. Lushington was to come here first, and make it all right with the governor, then the other was to walk in and support him, supposing the governor turned crusty; but it was all upset by Lushington's wanting to have a spoon with you. How he managed to get out of the room, with both of you standing there, I can't conceive; but the best of it is, in groping his way through the house, he pitched head foremost into the governor's bath, and made such a deuce of a row that I ran upstairs to see what had happened. Priscilla came too, but I just managed to get the Major out of sight down the back stairs, and through the back door into the stables, where I gave him a good rubbing down. You should have seen him, he did look such an idiot! All the while it was getting so awfully late, that when he was ready, he didn't half like going in, and Wentworth being here first, made it so awkward. But he was going to make profuse apologies, and swear he was delayed by falling into a piece of water, which the governor was to take for the duck-pond, though how anyone could get into it, on his way from the Chase, might have puzzled a wiser brain. Look here, Belle, you haven't laughed once, and I've been splitting my sides! What's the matter? Is it all settled?"

She leant her face on her hand, and did not answer.

"I say it's hard lines to keep it from me, when I've god-fathered the whole business."

"It's nothing to be proud of."

"Isn't it, though? Upon my word, I think it is. All the Woolwich girls will go raving mad to hear of it. Isn't anything better than being screwed up here like a convict?"

"Don't talk to me—I can bear it!"

"Hullo!" jumping off the sofa. "That's all the thanks I get for a regular Romeo and Juliet romance! Won't try my hand at it again, and next time you want a lover on a ladder, you must get them elsewhere!"

With a nod he left the room, feeling decidedly ill-used. The sentiment in his nature was still dormant, and until it was roused by his own personal experiences, he looked upon marriage as a prosaic institution, where the only things necessary for happiness were a fairly good-looking face, without a squint or a small-pox mark, and a fortune sufficient for mutual wants and pleasures. From this point of view he thought that any injury he had done to his cousin by that unfortunate valentine was more than repaid by the match that seemed likely to be the consequence of it. On the face of things it was infinitely more desirable to be the bride of a fascinating out-and-out good fellow like Lushington, than to be badgered and bullied as if she were a penniless dependent by an uncle who, to put it mildly, did not get on with her. Yes, he deserved to be patted on the back, after all the trouble he had taken, and he only got snubbed for his pains. Great shame, but girls are the most unreasonable things on earth. Jumping down the stairs two or three steps at a time, he nearly cannoned against his father, and drew back as if he had touched a nettle.

Not a smile relaxed the General's stern countenance. "Tell your cousin that I wish to speak to her in the library."

Phil made a face, and ran upstairs again, breathlessly. "Governor wants you," he said, laconically.

"Not downstairs?" and Sibel recoiled as if in horror, her mind instantly conjuring up the possibility of a meeting with Dudley Went-

worth. To see him now would be worse than death.

"Yes, instanter. Just put your hair straight, for it's tumbling about anyhow," he added, with an anxious look at her tangled curls. "It looks, you know, as if somebody had been rumpling it, or you had been to sleep in it, quite enough to put the governor in no end of a wax."

She turned to the looking-glass, and, dismayed by her own untidiness, ran into her bedroom, bathed her eyes, powdered her tear-stained cheeks, and smoothed her hair; anything to gain time. Phil gave her an approving glance when she came back.

"That's better. Do you know, Belle, you are a stunner. No wonder Judith is jealous of you."

She took no notice of his remark, but walked slowly down the passage, her heart beating so loud that she could scarcely hear anything else. Sounds of several voices came from the drawing-room, and the door opened just as she was in the act of passing it.

"I think I left it in the pocket of my coat, Mrs. Forrester," said the voice she loved better than any other on earth, and in a moment she was face to face with Dudley Wentworth.

He stood still, drawing a deep breath; then becoming conscious of the eyes that watched him, he conquered his own inclination to pass on, and stretched out his hand.

"It is ages since we met," and he smiled, as if he were glad the ages were over.

As their hands touched Sibel turned deathly white. She longed to ask him question after question, but her tongue was tied—and how could she have spoken with Judith and the rest to listen? One wild imploring look, in which her heart tried to speak in plain unmistakable English, and then she drew her hand away, and with a sob in her throat reached the library door; whilst he, utterly bewildered by that look, turned back into the drawing-room, and quite forgot the book which he had come out to fetch.

Could there be any mistake about her fancy for Lushington? No, utterly impossible, after her asking him to meet her at midnight on the Knoll. Still his perfect confidence in his previous convictions was shaken, and his mind wandered so much from the conversation during the rest of the evening that Judith asked him abruptly if he had a headache.

"Yes, a headache, the result of ill-temper. Don't pity me, for I quite deserve it."

"I think you have enough to upset you," she said, with infinite compassion her usually impulsive face lighting up into sudden warmth.

"I have a thousand times more than you know of," he said, gravely. "But I have no right to be savage. A man ought to conquer his troubles, and not let them conquer him."

"I am sure no one could bear them more nobly!" she murmured gently.

"How can you tell?" opening his eyes. "I am not likely to make my moan in public."

"This is like your second home."

"Thanks, you are most kind. I want to forget I ever had a home, and not to find another." He rose from his seat as he spoke, as if he were afraid that she had already produced her scissors for the purpose of clipping his wings. The idea was ridiculous, but he had never seen Judith Forrester look soft before, and it gave him an unpleasant sensation. Evidently it was a good thing that he was soon about to start for India, and that miles of land and water would soon lie between himself and the inmates of Coombe Lodge.

CHAPTER XI.

"FASTENING THE PETERS."

WHEN Sibel opened the library door General Forrester was standing on the hearthrug with his back towards her, whilst Major Lushington leaned against the mantelpiece on the opposite side. He came forward at once, his eyes

glowing as they fixed themselves in eager love upon the pale, sad little face of the girl who had bewitched him.

"Miss Fitzgerald," he said, bending low over her hand, "I have come to claim your promise."

She only bowed, with the ghost of a smile, feeling like a victim prepared for the sacrifice.

"Sibel, I consider it was due to me as well as to yourself, to inform me that you had entered into an engagement with this gentleman," said her uncle, sternly; "in fact, you had no right to enter into any engagement whatever without my sanction."

"You must excuse us, sir, but I was so eager to have it settled that I allowed her no time to think."

"If you consider that a proper way of proceeding, I don't," trying to look down his nose at the Major, who, unfortunately, was several inches taller than himself.

"Not proper, perhaps," with a slight smile, "but very natural. I am here to-night, at great personal inconvenience, in order to go through all the necessary formalities, and Wentworth has been kind enough to come with me, so that if you want anyone to vouch for my respectability," drawing himself up proudly, "you can have the word of a gentleman. I am no adventurer, and I have nothing to be ashamed of, except such weaknesses as men of my class are apt to indulge in."

"In other words," broke in the General, angrily, "you army-men of the present day are a absolute lot."

The Major shrugged his shoulders. "Some of us are a bad lot, but there are heaps of exceptions."

"But you, according to your own confession, are not amongst them?"

"Excuse me. I do not set up for a saint, neither am I an utterly disreputable sinner. A woman's instinct in these matters is infallible. If Miss Fitzgerald can trust me, surely you have no reason to doubt?"

"Pshaw! the child knows nothing of you, and has simply lost her heart to the first man she came across."

"Not the first, for I might have had a dangerous rival in Wentworth," with a mischievous smile, for he knew the speech would have its sting.

"Wentworth knows little or nothing of my niece, although he has been intimate with my family ever since his childhood; in fact, Judith and he were like brother and sister."

"A short acquaintance would scarcely have seemed a safeguard to me; but we are keeping Miss Fitzgerald waiting. Am I, or am I not, to be the happiest man in England?" turning to her with his most winning smile, as he took her little hand in his. It was cold, and he fancied that it was trembling.

"Not with my consent, until she is twenty-one."

To the girl it seemed like a promise of release, and she drew a deep breath of relief. To the Major it seemed like a threat of utter loss, and his eyes blazed with sudden anger.

"On what plea?"

"My niece is too young to decide on such matters for the present," and the General folded his arms.

"That is no reason why we should wait three years. Anything might happen between now and then," a thunder-cloud on his brow.

"Yes, anything," repeated the General, in an irritating manner, "even a change of mind."

"Never! Never, so long as life lasts."

"You forget that there are two people concerned in the matter. Do you imagine from what you have seen of my niece that constancy is her principal virtue?"

The Major winced, for he remembered a great difference between the way in which Sibel had treated him at Woolwich, and the manner in which she had received him at Coombe Lodge, but he answered loyally,—

"I think she has every virtue under the sun."

"I suppose so," drawing in his lips, "and I

hope you will never be disillusioned. I cannot say that I have implicit confidence in either of you. Sibel has behaved with the grossest indiscretion, and I conclude that you have encouraged her."

"Uncle," her chest heaving; "Major Lushington knows—"

"More than I do?" with a sneer. "I know that I should only be too glad to shift the responsibility of taking care of you for the future from my shoulders to his."

"I am only too ready!" and the Major drew Sibel gently towards him. "Give her to me now, and I shall be proud to call her my wife."

"But how long would it last? No, Major Lushington," shaking his head, "it would be an easy way of getting out of my difficulties, but—indeed, my dearest, I am not one to shirk. When married, I should have no more control over her at all, and I cannot trust her to go on without. If it were Judith—"

"Defend me!" murmured the Major beneath his moustache.

"If it were Judith I should have no doubt; but Sibel is young for her years, and, I say it all in kindness, not as discreet as I could wish."

"Uncle, this is not fair!" her cheeks flaming.

"Never mind, dearest, I have perfect faith in you."

"Perfect faith! Fiddlesticks," exclaimed the General, impatiently. "Time to talk of that when you've been married for ten years."

"I can talk of it now," said Lushington, firmly; "but before I go, I wish to know how we stand. Miss Fitzgerald has promised to marry me, and I intend her to be my wife. When she is twenty-one I need ask no consent but her own. Have you the cruelty to say we must wait till then?"

"There shall be no engagement, for the present."

"You can't say that, when she has given me her promise. Whatever happens, the engagement will stand."

"But she had no right to give you that promise," glaring at the poor girl, who looked as if she must drop on the carpet, as she stood with her graceful neck drooping, and her eyes cast on the ground.

"But I have it!" his eyes gleaming with triumph, "and no man shall take it from me. Sibel, tell him that you mean to be true to me," throwing his arm round her shrinking form, as if to proclaim his right.

She looked from one to the other, with a hunted expression in her pitiful eyes. Lushington seemed to compel her to answer. "I have promised," she said, hoarsely.

"Then you may take your promise back," exclaimed the General, wrathfully. "I will have no talk of marriage for years to come."

"Stay, sir," said the Major quietly, although his face was white with passion; "only a few minutes ago you said that Miss Fitzgerald through her kindness to me was disgraced for life. I think it is an exaggerated view, and I do not hold with it, but as you do, you must abide by it, and in that case marriage is the only remedy. This is what I have to propose. Let the engagement be announced in the papers at once, and leave the date of the marriage uncertain for the present. That is the only arrangement to which I can consent, if there is to be a delay at all."

"Really you are very good," in a tone of the bitterest irony.

"You dictate your terms, as if the right to consent or refuse were on your side, not mine," and the General bit his lip, not at all approving of the way in which the tables had been turned upon him.

"I have the right upon my side at all events."

"If the affair had been kept quiet—"

"But it has not been kept quiet!"

"In my day it would not have been thought honourable to let out a woman's secret."

"I did not let it out, that I swear. Dearest, believe me," turning to Sibel, "the only man I mentioned it to was Wentworth, and that

was when I appealed to him for advice, as a last resource."

"Why—why did you do it?"

"Because I was in such a fix—not knowing what was best for you."

"Uncle, mayn't I go? You cannot want me any longer."

General Forrester looked at the white imploring face, and a spasm of compassion seemed to pierce the crust of his heart. Some remembrance of his brother, Sir Edward, the gallant warm-hearted soldier, crossed his mind, and he wondered what he would say to the woe-begone face of his child—so young—so fair, and yet so unutterably sad. Perhaps a father might have understood the girl—she was quite beyond him. Giving her up as a hopeless problem, he turned to the Major. There was no mistaking his eagerness, which was patent to the most careless eye. He was certainly in love with Sibel, and if she did not care for him to the same extent, at least the engagement would silence every tongue and keep the girl out of Wentworth's way.

"Very well, Major Lushington," he said, gravely, "it shall be as you will, and you may announce to all the world if you like that you are engaged to my niece."

"I thank you, General, from the bottom of my heart, and the artilleryman grasped the old man's hand, his eyes shining with delight. "Believe me, you shall never have cause to regret your kindness."

"Say the same to my niece—that is of more consequence."

"I can. My darling, the love of a life-time shall be yours," he raised her cold hands to his lips as, and wondered at their coldness. "You shall never want a friend to defend you, and you shall never shed a tear that I can help." Then he stooped, and pressed a passionate kiss on her unwilling lips, as if to seal his rights, and raising his head looked at the General defiantly.

Sibel moved slowly to the door, feeling as if she were in a dream; Lushington followed, and held it open for her, bending down as she passed him to whisper, "Write to me, as soon as you can."

She tried to smile, but her lips seemed to be galvanized, so she bent her head without a word, and went down the hall past the drawing room door. Wentworth was saying, "Yes, Mrs. Forrester, as soon as I settle my father at 'The Chestnuts' I shall have to start for India."

Pray Heaven that he might be gone before she arrived!

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD-BYE TO THE LODGE.

There was a flutter of excitement when the news of Sibel's engagement spread through the house. Phil's congratulations were the most hearty, because he thought Major Lushington a capital fellow, but Judith's were equally sincere, because it pleased her to think that Sibel's attractions would no longer be dangerous in the matrimonial market. Rose wished her joy, but looked as if she thought the joy was doubtful. Mrs. Forrester sighed, and said she hoped Major Lushington would make a good husband, rather as if she imagined that the artilleryman was a regular Don Juan. Sibel was no longer banished from the rest of the family, although she could not understand why, if she were supposed to have done wrong, the engagement should have absolved her.

She made the school-room her chief sitting-room, but as her meals no longer came upstairs, she was obliged to go down stairs to eat them. General Forrester, by his wife's advice, advanced a quarter's allowance, in order that his niece's toilette might be put in order, and both Sibel and the maid were very busy in making the necessary preparations for her lengthy visit. Work was a relief to her, for it helped to banish thought, and she plied her needle as industriously as if she had been born a sempstress. Rose offered her help, but was apt to chat, whilst her work lay idly in

her lap, and Phil looked on with a tendency to grumble at everything under the sky. He was disgusted at losing Sibel, whom he was wont to consider, at intervals, either as his torment or his blessing; disgusted at the part he had played in the affair, disgusted at the thought that a comparative stranger had been forced to offer her a home, because his father chose to turn her out of the house.

"When Hugh is at home for the vacation, I hope they will ask me over to 'The Chestnuts,'" he said, abruptly, as he sat on the school-room table swinging his legs, whilst Sibel's brown head was bent over some lace which she was pleating into dainty folds, for her own white neck.

"I don't know that you would like it. It will be very different to the Chase—quite a small place, without boating, fishing, or shooting."

"It would be better than this, anyhow."

"I should think you would find it very dull, with only an old man, Hugh, and me."

"Let them ask me, and you shall see."

"Why, Phil," looking up in surprise, "there would be nothing to do!"

"At any rate, I could tease you."

"So you might, but you would get tired of it."

"Not so tired as I shall be of moping here all by myself. Did you know that Wentworth was coming here to-night to bid them all good-bye?"

"No," bending still lower over her lace. "When did you see him?"

"At the railway-station, when I sent off that parcel for the governor. Most of his luggage was there—such a heap, as big as a woman's trousseau! I never saw such a fellow for business. He has arranged everything here as well as at the other place; settled his father's affairs as well as his own; cut down the expenses, sold the horses, and is much readier to start than most people would be who had had nothing else to think of."

"Does he go down to Berkshire with us tomorrow?" in a muffled voice.

"No, he's off by six o'clock in the morning. He was awfully sorry, but he could not manage it."

"It seems a pity," with a deep sigh.

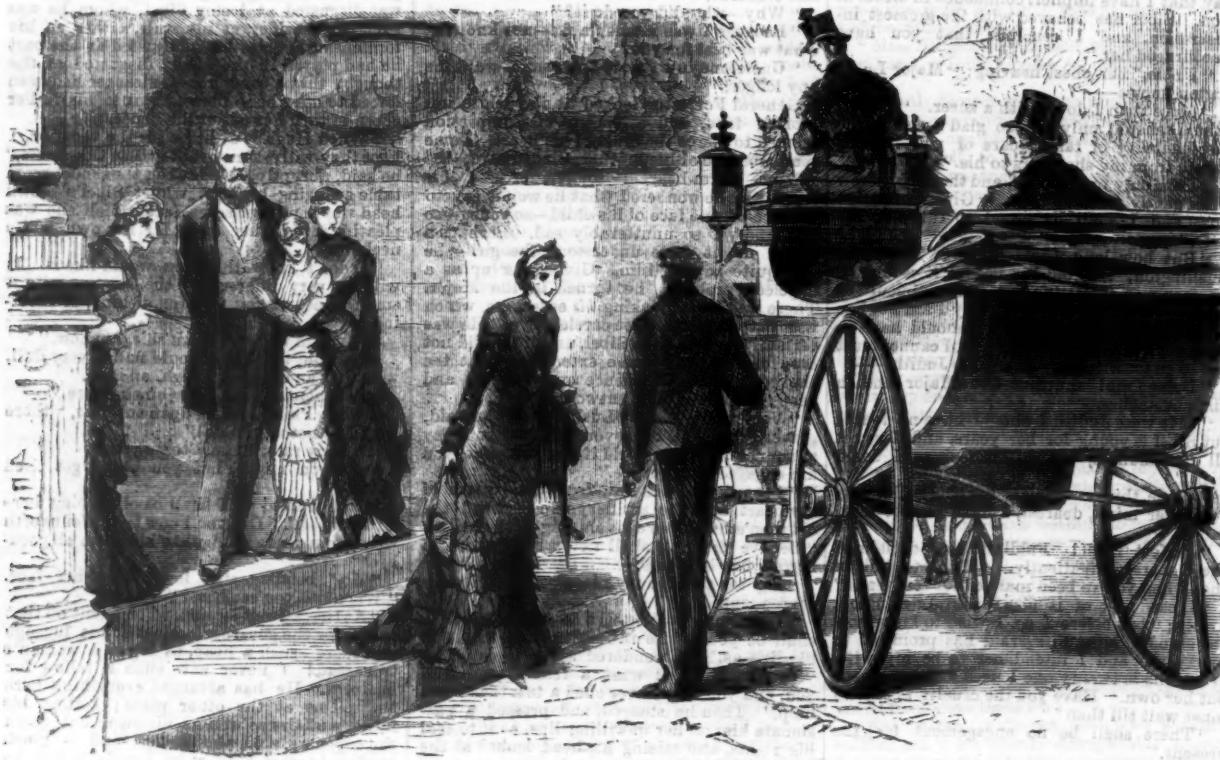
That evening Sibel pleaded the excuse of a bad headache and remained upstairs; but as she lay on the sofa with throbbing temples, her ears were acutely alive to every sound after the front door-bell rang, and she heard Dudley Wentworth's footprint in the hall. It was better—far better—that she should not see him; it was by her own free will that she stayed upstairs, but her heart seemed as if it would burst out of her breast when she heard his voice, and she held fast to the side of the sofa as if her rabidious muscles would have taken her out of the room against her will.

This would have been the mockery of a good-bye, a pair of cold hands meeting across a gulf, a pair of averted eyes not daring to meet lest the truth should flash out of them, and make all pretences useless. No, to have another good-bye like that when they parted at the gate she would gladly have given ten years of her life, and thought it wondrous cheap at the price; but not for this, with Judith's curious eyes fixed upon her, and that strange cold look upon his face that she had seen at the door of the church.

She lay there trembling at the thought of his presence in the house, unable to fix her mind on anything else so long as he was so near that with the smallest effort of her will she could see him. At nine o'clock he came, and she gave him two hours for all his parting speeches, but in less than half the drawing-room door opened, and she heard his voice once more in the hall.

For one instant the mad thought crossed her mind that he was coming upstairs, and her heart stood still. But no, he was only stopping to put on his overcoat, and the whole family seemed to be watching the process.

"Well, good-bye, Wentworth!" said the



[GOOD-BYE TO COOMBE LODGE.]

General, in his double bass. "We shall miss the bay mare at the cover-side."

"Not so much as I shall miss the friends I leave behind." That clear ringing tone, when she heard it again! "Good-bye to you all."

Then the door shut with a sullen clang, which seemed to find its echo in her breast, and he was gone—gone from her life like the sunlight from the day, when night throws her black mantle over the earth.

She closed her eyes, and lay quite still, without a tear on her lashes or a sigh on her lips. A sudden calm came over her which was nothing less than first cousin to despair.

Presently she crept away to her bed anxious to escape Phil, whose step was already on the stairs. She could not talk to him or to Rose, and she could not listen to what Dudley had looked, or said, or forgotten to say. She was better away from them all, alone with her sorrowful heart.

The next morning the grand carriage from the Chase, with the coronet on the panels and the high-stepping horses working destruction to the gravel, stopped at the door to pick up Miss Fitzgerald; and arrayed in her long, brown jacket and toque, she came down the stairs of Coombe Lodge for the last time.

Mrs. Forrester wept over her niece, feeling true compassion for the lonely girl whom her husband had turned out of the house. She never had the strength of mind to oppose him, but whilst she bent to his hard will she let many bitter tears fall at the same time.

"Good-bye, my child!" she said, with more affection than she had ever shown before. "May Heaven bless you, and make you happy!"

"Good-bye, Sibel," and Judith deposited a prim kiss on the low, white forehead. "I am sure I hope you will be able to get on with Lord Wentworth."

"Oh, dear!" cried Rose, flinging her arms round her cousin's neck, "what shall we do without you?"

"Come, come, Lord Wentworth must not be kept waiting!" said the General, impatiently.

Sibel gently detached the clinging arms, and after a loving kiss on the tear-stained cheeks, stretched out her hand to Phil.

He took it, looking rather foolish, for like a boy he was ashamed of showing the slightest emotion, and for the life of him he could not keep his lip from trembling. Then he ducked his head, and kissed her cheek, mumbling, "See you again, some day, old girl!"

Then she was handed into the carriage, and there was only time for a shake of the hands, through the window, with the General before they drove off. Then, for the first time, Sibel spied Hugh curled up on the opposite seat.

"I beg your pardon; but I really did not know you were there!" holding out her hand, which the boy held tight for half a minute.

"You saw Phil plain enough!"

"Yes, that was natural. I had to say good-bye to him!"

"And only 'how d'ye do?' to me, so I was of no consequence!" his large dark eyes under the thick shelter of their long, silken lashes looking sullen and resentful.

"Why, Hugh, you are forgetting your manners!" said Lord Wentworth, reprovingly.

"How can you tell a young lady to her face that you would rather it were 'good-bye' than 'how d'ye do'?"

"I never did! I swear I never did!" excitedly.

"You seemed to infer it!"

"Sibel knows what I mean," looking at her appealingly. "If I had been in Phil's place I couldn't have stood it!"

"An Englishman must stand anything!" she said, with a smile. "If Phil had cried I should have been ashamed of him!"

"And I, if I had made a fool of myself I shouldn't have shown it! When I say good-bye to you, you shall kiss me as you did Phil, and if my cheeks are wet—I forbid you to laugh!"

"Phil is my cousin, I think. You are mad to-day, Hugh!"

"And if I am, it is no wonder! I am leaving every friend I have, except the best!" with a bow to those before him.

"But you are of an age when every new year brings a fresh stock of friends," said the old man, with a touch of sadness in his voice. "To you change is natural, to me almost intolerable."

Sibel gave a shy look of admiration at the noble face beside her. It was calm and composed, and no one would have guessed to look at it that its owner had just been through the terrible ordeal of quitting for the last time the home of his fathers.

"You—you bear everything so nobly!" said the boy, in a choked voice, and relapsed into silence.

The rest of the journey was performed without mishap. Lord Wentworth's man, Landon, took all the trouble off his master's hands, and Hugh Macdonald bought a heap of newspapers and books for the general benefit.

About four o'clock in the afternoon they reached Thornfield station, and found the brougham, one of the carriages which Lord Wentworth had decided to retain, waiting for them.

After driving through some pretty lanes, which were scarcely broad enough to be designated as roads, and passing through one beechwood after another, they turned in at the gate of the Chestnuts.

Not a word was spoken as they drove up the neatly-kept drive with ivy-grown banks on each side, which in summer time the golden St. John's wort liked to sprawl with ivy stars. There was a rustic porch over the door, but Sibel saw nothing of the pleasant verandahs and gabled windows, for on the steps Dudley Wentworth was standing, with a smile on his lips, to gladden his father's heart.

(To be continued.)



["YES, SHE IS VERY LOVELY!" SHE HEARD BEAUCHAMP SAY. "BUT A DANGEROUS WOMAN!"]

NOVELETTE.]

NEAREST AND DEAREST.

CHAPTER I.

"Yes, they will all be here by the twelfth," said Marjory Rainham; "Lady Peyton told me so to-day."

"And who are 'all'?" queried Grace Rivers, with languid interest, flirting her huge fan before her, to drive away an intrusive wasp, which seemed to mistake her pink-and-white face for some gay-hued flower.

"Well, Captain Beauchamp, Major Charteris, the Devereux, the Aspinalls, Lord Yarrow, and last, though by no means least, his high mightiness, Noel Vandeleur Penrith, of Penrith Castle, Cornwall, and Eaton-square, London."

"You *must* consider him mighty if he stands higher in your estimation than the Duke's son."

"I do," replied Miss Rainham, with a wicked twinkle in her black eyes. "He *is* mighty, magnificent. It behoves one to speak of such a lady-killer, such a slayer of women's hearts, such a *Narcissus* and *Adonis*, with bated breath, and becoming awe."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed. Wait till you see him, and I am sure you will agree with me."

"I have seen him. In fact, we are old friends," and the widow smiled complacently, and smoothed the frills of her cambric gown with her white, jewelled fingers.

"Really, Mrs. Rivers? and you have survived it?"

"Yes."

"You are a wonder, then. I thought all such insignificant things as women went down before the artillery of his attractions, and died of broken hearts, when left and neglected by him."

"I must be an exception to the rule, in that

case, and you also, as you still live, and look blooming."

"Oh! it is different with me," said Marjory, hastily; "I met him four years ago, when I was only fourteen, a school-girl in short frocks and thick boots. I was utterly beneath his notice. He always looked over the top of my head, never took the trouble to say good-night or good morning, and used to flirt atrociously with any woman he could get hold of, when there was no one in the room but myself; just as though I was a chair, or a table, or any other inanimate object; without eyes to see, or ears to hear."

"Was it so very dreadful to flirt before a third person?" asked the widow, with an amused smile at the bright girlish face before her.

"No, not to flirt. But he did worse. He used actually to *spoon*, and each day with a different fair one. He always said the same things though."

"Did he?"

"Yes, and they seemed to like it very well. Perhaps that was because they didn't know he had said exactly the same thing to some one else a short time before, and would say them again a little later on."

"Perhaps so."

"I think it is mean—horribly mean, of a man to do that kind of thing. He is two-and-thirty now, and is old enough to know better."

"Upon my word, Marjory," remarked a young fellow, who was lying full length on the trim turf, with his head on a heap of newly-cut grass, "Upon my word, I think you must be in love with Penrith, or you would never abuse him in this fashion. You do it to hide the depth and strength of your affection."

"Heaven forbid!" piously ejaculated his cousin, turning her eyes up to the blue, cloudless sky. "I couldn't love a man of that sort."

"Why not? He is handsome enough to please anyone."

"That may be, Joe. But his air of satis-

faction, and calm superiority, is maddening, and the way he tasks himself on to the best-looking woman in the room, married, single, or a widow, and allows her to amuse him, till he sees someone whom he thinks could do it better, is disgusting."

"The said women—married, single, or widows—don't seem to think so."

"No, more shame for them."

"Why?" asked Joe Peyton, with a cool laugh, and a quizzical glance at Mrs. Rivers, who was swaying her great fan slowly backwards and forwards. "Why, my child! The single and the widows amuse him because they hope and pray that some day he may take unto himself a wife, to help him to spend his ten thousand a year, and be installed mistress of his country castle and his town mansion, and the married do it because they are not happy in their matrimonial relations, and possibly would like to alter them—to divorce or be divorced, and to forge fresh fetters. They have an object, a good tangible one, and when women have, they never mind what trouble they take."

"It doesn't matter what amount of trouble they take in this case, for it won't do them a bit of good," announced Miss Rainham, rather snappishly.

"Why not?"

"Because Noel Penrith isn't a marrying man."

"How do you know?" demanded her cousin, sending another sharp glance in Mrs. Rivers' direction, who, while she pretended to be absorbed in admiring the elaborate beading of her little *bonnets*, was listening intently to the conversation.

"Because I heard him tell Willie, when I was staying at the Aspinalls, that he would be afraid to marry, as, from the way he had been chased and chevied by match-making mammas, spinsters in the thirties, and poverty-stricken women in general, he was sure he would only be married for the sake of his money, and that if

he were poor, he wouldn't be smiled on and petted as he is now, and then he said something to the effect that he had never seen a woman good enough for him, that he would require a 'rare pale Marguerite,' something quite out of the common — a woman who, though all modesty and innocence, would give him to understand plainly that she would feel grateful and obliged if he would throw her the handkerchief, and honour her by —"

"Marjory, Marjory, how can you tell such awful fibs!"

"They are not fibs!" declared Marjory, stonily; "it's the truth, and he said, besides that he would never ask a woman to be his wife, unless he was pretty certain of her saying 'Yes,' as he wouldn't care to be refused by a woman. And, oh! the scorn the man threw into that one word, I can't convey to you the least idea of it."

"I wouldn't try," said the young man, rather drily, "I think you have said quite enough, Madame Marjory, and I don't think it is fair to libel the absent. That little unruly member of yours runs away with you sometimes, and —"

"Pooh," interrupted the wilful young lady, with a peat.

"And makes you say things that you oughtn't to say," he continued, calmly. "I certainly don't think it is fair to make these sort of remarks behind a man's back, when he hasn't a chance of defending himself. Do you, Edith?" and he turned to address a girl sitting a little way apart, in an easy garden-chair, with a book of Swinburne's poems in her hand.

"I hardly know," she answered, slowly. "It certainly does not seem right to say unkind things of any one, and yet it is well to be forewarned with regard to the character of this man who is coming to stay here; then we poor women can be forearmed, and able in a measure to resist his matchless attractions."

"I hope you don't intend to believe all the rubbish Marjory has been chattering about Penrith."

"Well, of course I shall take it *au contraire*, still there must be some truth in it, and I think men who fancy every woman they come across is going to fall in love with them or their money, and try to marry them by main force, are very objectionable animals."

"You are quite right," agreed Joe, "only I assure you, Penrith isn't that kind of fellow. He has been tremendously patted and chased for obvious reasons, and is naturally a little cautious, and doubtful of the sincerity of women who are ready to adore him after an hour's acquaintance. I am certain, though, that he isn't the wretch Marjory describes him to be. He is a little proud and particular, like, as I suppose everyone else does, to be made much of, and —"

"Have the *fortunate* woman he thinks sufficiently good and uncommon for him, declare her love and sue for his, with becoming modesty and diffidence," concluded Edith Lister, with a sarcastic smile on her handsome mouth.

"No, no!" expostulated young Peyton, vehemently; "you have received a false impression, and like the rest of your sex you are so obstinate that you are determined to retain it, and won't listen to reason."

"Yes, I will, Joe, on any subject but that of Noel Penrith."

"Oh! this is too bad," he ejaculated wrathfully. "Marjory, I should like to shake you for what you have done."

"I dare say you would, dear boy, but I don't want to be shaken," and she settled herself comfortably in her chair, and went on reading her novel, *Ouida's last*.

"Mrs. Rivers, I appeal to you. Is Penrith the cad my cousin has depicted him?"

"Not exactly," rejoined the widow cautiously, still swinging the fan to and fro. "Yet I certainly think he is under the impression that penniless girls would be greatly obliged to him if he raised them to the dignity of misses of his heart and home."

"To you, really?" inquired his champion rather dolefully.

"Yes, really, and I can assure you, Miss Lister, that the best way to get into his good graces is not to pay him much attention. You will find that answer when flattery and attention fail."

"Thank you!" responded M's Lister, letting her eyes rest coldly on Mrs. Rivers' artistically "got-up" face. "I have no wish to get into his good graces, so your advice is wasted upon me."

"Indeed! I thought it might be of use. He is an excellent match for a girl without a fortune," and the widow glances somewhat spitefully at Edith's beautiful features.

Miss Lister did not vouchsafe an answer, but went on reading Swinburne, and silence fell on the little group.

The sunlight filtered through the thick foliage of the lime above them, loaded with sweet blossoms; there was the scent of hay on the breeze which rustled and stirred the clustering leaves, and swayed the brilliant dahlias and gorgeous sunflowers with its gentle touch; — passing on to measure other world scores to the giant oaks and elms beyond in the home park, where the cawing rooks built their nests, and had high revel through the long summer days; there was the pleasant hum of bees around; butterflies swept by; ring doves were cooing; traveller's joy crowned the hedges that surrounded the Peyton's garden; the honeysuckle was trailing sparingly; the last dog-rose was letting fall its snowy petals; away in the meadows the barley was ripening, and the wheat yellowing fast, and the moors were purple with heather.

It was a fair scene, lit up by the golden beams of the August sun, but Mrs. Rivers scarcely saw its beauties, or if she did took no note of them; her thoughts were busy with other things than real landscapes. She had come to Peyton Manor with an object, and that object was the subjugation of Noel Penrith. She had accepted Lady Peyton's invitation, given the May before in town, with eager gratitude, because she knew Penrith, after nearly four years, absence abroad, would be sure to spend the shooting season with his old and most intimate friend Willie Peyton, and she also knew that a country house was a splendid field for matrimonial enterprise, and if this shy fish was to be landed by her she could do it better there than anywhere else, and she was anxious, terribly anxious, to obtain her quarry, and thought she had something to go upon.

Ten years before, Penrith, then a young fellow of twenty-two, had paid her marked attentions in his usual careless style, but had never actually proposed; so when Mr. Rivers, a wealthy city man, lost his heart irretrievably to pretty Grace Wynter, and begged hard to be made happy and her husband, her mother had obliged her to accept the offer, saying that Noel was only amusing himself at her expense, and that at six-and-twenty she could not expect to make a very brilliant marriage. So the girl stifled the instincts and longings of her heart, remembering the fable of the dog who left the substance trying to grasp the shadow, and married the middle-aged city man, who had a big balance at his bankers; and for nearly eight years she revelled in every dissipation and luxury money could procure. Then came the crash. Mr. Rivers' money seemed to melt away like the snow of last year. Ugly rumours were afloat, and one day he was found dead in his bed, and all his kind friends said it was certainly suicide, though a merciful jury brought in a verdict of "Death by misadventure from an overdose of chloral," so Grace was left a widow with two hundred a year, which was quite insufficient to supply the wants of the extravagant little woman; and a face, from which the early freshness had faded, and which it was her constant care to embalm in a mixture of red and white paint and powder — laid on, it must be allowed, in a most artistic and scientific manner, yet per-

ceptible at times in a strong light, or at the finish of a hard night's dancing.

She couldn't afford to wait. The two years of mourning were just up, and she had with infinite trouble obtained some gowns from her modiste, delicate greys and lavenders, and white lacey ones, marvels of daintiness, without paying for them, and thus armed and equipped for the fray had come to the Manor, bent upon conquest. No thought of defeat had crossed her mind until that afternoon; but as she looked at Edith Lister's calm, proud face, she felt intuitively that her hostess's sister might prove a dangerous rival. She was just the sort of girl Penrith would admire, tall, graceful, self-possessed, accomplished, and not given to making advances, or poaching on the rights of the other sex, by making love instead of being made love to.

She would be a dangerous rival, yet with a fair field and no favour, but Grace Rivers mentally registered a vow that she should not have a fair field, and that Penrith should, very soon after his arrival, be acquainted with the fact that she was a penniless lassie, and that her sister, Lady Peyton, was extremely anxious to get her well married to some nice, eligible young man.

Lady Peyton was not a match-maker, far from it, still she longed to see her dearly-loved and only sister settled, and with good reason. Edith's fortune consisted of sixty pounds a year, and was certainly not enough to live on. She was ever welcome at the Manor, and always spent six or seven months at her brother-in-law's house, and the rest of the time visiting at friends who were glad to have her with them; but it was not an entirely pleasant mode of existence, and Edith secretly sighed for a home of her own, if even small and quiet. Her pride, which was her greatest and almost only failing, forbade her living altogether on Sir William's charity, though the Baronet, with whom she was a great favourite, would have been more than pleased if she would have done so, and his wife never ceased pleading with her sister to share the good fortune that was her lot, and was always met with a steady though gentle refusal. The good fortune of finding a rich, well-bred and devoted husband had come unexpectedly to Marian Lister. Five years before, when she was thirty, and had given up all thoughts of matrimony, she met at the Aspinalls, where she was living as companion, with a good salary, which eked out her slender income, and enabled her to keep Edith who was twelve years her junior, at a fashionable finishing school, Sir William Peyton, a man about her own age; a bluff, honest good-tempered country gentleman, who fell in love with her sweet face and sweater disposition, and made love in such downright earnest, and with such exceeding promptitude, that he met her proposed, was accepted and married, all within a month. "Happy's the wooing that's not long adoing," and happy it proved in Lady Peyton's case. During the five years of her married life she had never regretted her choice; she was perfectly happy in her matrimonial relations, and the only bitter drop in the cup was her sister's unprotected state and uncertain future.

"I wish she wasn't so proud," murmured the mistress of the Manor, looking up from the delicate lace-work she was occupied with, and sending a tender glance towards the graceful figure under the shade of the blossom-burdened lime. "I fear it will interfere sadly with my little matrimonial plan. It will be a case of Greek meeting Greek. Heigho! what a contrary world this is! I must try to-morrow to drop a few judicious words in praise of Noel to her. Now, my darlings," she added, addressing two little toddlers of four, who were playing at her feet. "Run and tell Auntie that tea is ready, and to come in with the others," and then she stood with a world of affection in her soft grey eyes, watching the twins as they trotted hand-in-hand over the green sward, going as steadily and demurely as though they

were an old man and an old woman, instead of two mere infants.

"Mummy says tea is eddy," lisped Mysie, touching her aunt's hand.

"Is it, my precious?" said Miss Lister, catching the mite up in her arms and kissing her fondly, her calm, proud face altering strangely, and showing what a loving heart there was under that cold exterior. "We will come in, then," and rising, she gave a hand to each of the babies and walked to the house between them, followed by the others, who were all ready, even down to Joe, for their five o'clock tea.

"Look at the time!" cried Lady Peyton, gaily, as they entered the room in which she was seated, presiding at the tea-table; "it is nearly half-past five. What were you doing to forget your tea?"

"We were having a most interesting discussion," replied Marjory, gravely.

"Indeed! May I ask what it was?"

"Certainly," she acquiesced, with greater gravity. "According to Joe, we have been prying and conning as to whether a certain gentleman of our acquaintance is a cad or not."

"Who is the gentleman?"

"Noel Penrith."

"Oh! and what was your decision?" Lady Peyton glanced at her sister as she put the question.

"The house is divided. Joe says he's a *rara avis*, Mrs. Rivers won't commit herself to any decided opinion, and Edith and I consider him an objectionable animal."

"My dear!" expostulated her hostess, in dismay.

"We do, really, and a lady-killer as well."

"But—but Edith doesn't know him."

"No," broke in Joe, wrathfully, "and that little wretch Marjory has made her believe that he is a low-minded cad by chattering a whole heap of rubbish about him."

"So he is!" muttered Miss Rainham, *sotto voce*.

"You are very wrong to do that, Marjory," said Lady Peyton, with an amount of severity that was astonishing for her. "You should never traduce people behind their backs; it is mean, and Noel Penrith is an honourable, noble fellow, with very few of the failings common to most of the young men of the present day. I hope, Edith, that you won't think anything more about this?"

"Certainly I shall not," replied Miss Lister, with the utmost nonchalance, as she played with the little gilt spoon, poised it on the tip of her slender finger, to the intense delight of the twins, who watched her with wide-open eyes. "I don't know Mr. Penrith, have no particular ambition to make his acquaintance, and shall leave thinking about him and his affairs to other women whom it may interest."

She added the last clause because she saw Mrs. Rivers was looking at her with a malicious twinkle in her light-blue eyes, and it roused the girl's haughty spirit.

"Of course it can't interest you," agreed Marian, quickly, seeing she had made rather a mistake; "but I don't wish you to be unjustly prejudiced," and then Lady Peyton maintained a judicious silence; but for the rest of the afternoon and evening there was a cloud on her usually placid face.

CHAPTER II.

"Mr. PENRITH will be here to-day, Edith," announced Lady Peyton, a few days later, as she and her sister sat in her dainty boudoir, gay with bright chintzes, Persian rugs, lace curtains, veiling, pink sateen, and all the feminine nick-nacks which make a room so charming, strewn about.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, he is coming with Lord Farrow. They are both rather tired of town, and of Ryde, Brighton, and other gay places where they have been so long for a little quiet, and are coming here to enjoy a few days of it before the twelfth."

"Quiet to quick bosoms is a hell," quoted Marjory, sententiously, as she sprang through the open window and alighted at Edith's side. Narcissus will soon get tired of it and sigh for other fields and pastures new, and wild dissipation of all sorts."

"Marjory, I must beg you not to speak in this way of Mr. Penrith. It is most unjust, and, I may add, unladylike. I am sure Sir William would be more than annoyed if he knew of the way in which you disparage his most intimate friend. Remember,—

"A lie that is wholly a lie can be met with and fought with outright.

But a lie that is half a lie is a harder matter to fight."

You know next to nothing about the young man, and draw your unfair conclusions from having seen him do what heaps of other men do, when staying in the same house with attractive women—chat with them and pay them the polite attentions a true gentleman always gives to members of the fair sex. I am inclined to think your pride was wounded because he did not, seeing you were a mere child, pay attentions to you. You are a vain little thing."

"It isn't that, indeed, Lady Peyton," burst out Marjory; but her hostess, without waiting to hear what she had to say left the room, looking very much annoyed.

"How I hate that man!" ejaculated Miss Rainham, after a minute's silence, clenching her tiny hands and bringing them down with considerable force, not on the white goat-skin rug as she meant to, but on to the back of Mrs. Rivers' fat poodle, causing that elderly animal to yelp and howl dismally; "and how I should like to take him down a peg, and show him that all women are not silly enough to worship him and his money."

"So should I!" said Edith, quietly.

"Would you?"

"Yes, I should like to lead him on to propose to me, and then reject him with scorn and contempt."

"That would be grand! Do try and get him to propose. You can easily do it, you are so lovely," and Marjory gazed with genuine admiration at the pale, statuesque face of her friend.

"I don't know about that. I might compass it if I exerted myself, but query, is it worth the trouble?"

"Worth the trouble? Why of course it would be. Just picture to yourself the expression of his face when he expected to hear a 'Yes' and only got a 'No'! It would be worth any amount of plotting and planning. And then you would cut out that little horror, Mrs. Rivers. I am sure she has come here to entrap some unfortunate man into being her second. She has even, for want of anyone better, ogled Joe—my Joe. What impudence!" and the heiress stamped her foot and looked as though she could have boxed the "little horror's" ears.

"As that is the case, Marjory, wouldn't it be better for you to try and get Mr. Penrith to offer you his hand and heart?" suggested Miss Lister, calmly.

"It wouldn't be a bit of use. I'm not good-looking enough, and he doesn't like short people. Besides, Joe mightn't like it, and I only care to talk to him," and a tender smile crossed the wilful little woman's dusky face.

"Well, then, if this creature is to be taken down, I suppose I must do it."

"Yes, certainly. Make yourself very magnificent for dinner, and carry the fortress by storm. Shall I go and get you some flowers?"

"Yes, please. Some scarlet geraniums and stephanotis. Bring them up to me;" and Edith went slowly to her room to attire herself for conquest, a thoughtful look in her gay eyes, and a line on her fair brow.

A couple of hours later Miss Lister descended to the drawing-room, looking splendidly handsome and queenly, in a gown of shimmering white, with the geraniums and stephanotis at her breast and in her soft, wavy hair. All the guests were assembled, as she meant they should be, when she made her appearance, and she created a perceptible sensa-

tion as she entered. Lord Farrow, a great blue-eyed broad-shouldered giant, who was talking to Sir William, came forward to greet her with *empressement*; and even the tall, aristocratic stranger talking to Mrs. Rivers looked a second time at the new comer, while Marjory, sitting in a corner with Joe, whispered "Doesn't she look lovely!" and Joe muttered "Yes, but not so nice as you," and received a pinch for his compliment that nearly made him sneeze.

"Mr. Penrith, my sister," said Lady Peyton, with considerable pride; and Edith bowed coldly to the man whose love she intended to win, simply to reject; and turning at once continued her conversation with Nelson Farrow, who had been cherishing a hopeless affection for her for considerably over a year without daring to give utterance to his passion.

Marian would have liked to tell Noel to take her sister into dinner, but she felt it would not be polite, so sent him in with the widow, much to that enterprising person's delight, and told Lord Farrow to take Edith, while Marjory was paired off with the devoted Joe.

During dinner Miss Rainham watched Mrs. Rivers with keen disapproval, as she sighed and languished and looked love unutterable out of her pale eyes at her cavalier, who, truth to tell, seemed quite agreeable to being languished at, and never sent a single glance at the pale face opposite him, partly hidden by the silver epaulets with its load of roses and exquisite ferns. The widow had much to tell him about mutual friends; and having been away from England for some years he was quite willing to listen to the *on dit* and racy bits of scandal that his fast companion told with such go and spirit, with many a flourish of her white fingers, which were simply miniature jewel-stands for the exhibition of costly rings, and many a nod of her golden-hued head and curve of her reddened mouth. She amused him and he wanted to be amused. Killing time at best is dreary work, and that had been his only occupation since he left Oriel, and took possession of the splendid estate and castle left him by his uncle.

Noel Penrith was a man with a vigorous intellect and a tender heart, but one had rusted from want of occupation, and the other had become somewhat sceptical through the treachery of a woman he had loved in his early youth, who had deceived him, and left him to marry a richer man, and also from the amount of attention he was in the habit of receiving from all spinsters, who would shamelessly snub poor men to gain his favour, and who were, as Joe said, ready to adore him after an hour's acquaintance. He hardly believed in women collectively, though he did individually. There were a few he admired and esteemed greatly, and one of them was his friend Peyton's wife.

For Marian was a great glory of a woman—fine, tall, strong, handsome, with yellow hair and grey eyes, and the sweetest expression in the world. When he had met her on his return to England the previous June, in town, he had been loud in his praise of her beauty and charm of manner, and had been heard to declare that when he met a woman like Willie's wife that he should marry. He had been told she had a sister, then staying in Ireland, and felt some curiosity to see her. Now, his feeling was one of disappointment.

She was far lovelier than Lady Peyton, with a more graceful figure and distinguished air, but she seemed to him cold, emotionless and haughty to a degree, and he didn't quite like haughty women, he wasn't used to them. Nelson Farrow was in the seventh heaven during that dinner. Edith had never been so gracious and smiling to him, and the poor fellow's heart began to beat with a dangerous feeling of joy and hope; and after the ladies left the dining-room he fidgeted until the strains of a rich soprano voice singing, "Tell me yet again," gave him a good excuse for joining them.

He made his way at once to the piano, at

which Miss Lister was seated, and begged for another song, and yet another, when that was graciously accorded him, and then finding a duet, "Vox Arcana," he sang it with her, and fell deeper and deeper in love with this beautiful statuette woman, who would never play Galatea to his Pygmalion, and let him wake into life and warmth the coldness of her heart and soul.

"A woman's head is always influenced by her heart, but a man's heart is always influenced by his head," says Lady Blessington.

This is not always the case, and it was not likely to be so in that of Lady Lister and Nelson Farrow. His heart knew no influence save that of her matchless beauty, and his head couldn't help him in the matter at all; so he was in a bad way, and likely to come to grief over it.

"Are you as fond of music as you used to be?" asked the widow, as Penrith lounged up to her and sat down beside her on the sofa, so close that he crushed the flounces of her dainty lavender gown.

"Yes, rather, I prefer singing, though!"

"Most people do, I think. Do you like Miss Lister's voice?"

"Well, I am not much of a judge. It is a fine voice, I suppose, but seems to me to lack expression."

"A great many people are of that opinion. She is cold altogether—lacks animation. What do you think of her? She is considered a perfect beauty. Do you admire her?"

"Admire her! I hardly know yet. I haven't looked at her more than three times."

"Three times! Have you counted them that you know so accurately, and haven't they been enough to allow you to form an opinion?"

"Hardly. I like to study a face. In a casual glance one often misses the best points."

"Yes, I am disappointed though, that you won't give me your opinion."

"Are you? Then I'll study her now to please you," and, turning, he gazed with lazy indifference at Edith, who was just lifting her head to answer some questions of Farrow's.

The wax candles in the crystal chandeliers threw their light on the upturned face, with its arching black brows, mobile lips, and straight features, showing every curve distinctly.

"Well, what do you think?" demanded Mrs. Rivers, with an eagerness she could not altogether conceal, as he finished his survey.

"She is beautiful, I suppose," he answered slowly, almost reluctantly, "but it is a beauty that one looks for in a statue or a picture, not in a living woman. It is too cold."

"Yes, as I said before, she lacks animation."

"Exactly so, and she is too pale."

"You are right in that. It would be a charity for some one to advise her to use a little rouge, although I think it a terrible thing for women to make up," concluded the widow audaciously, flirting her inseparable companion, the huge fan, with a certain sort of artificial grace.

"A terrible thing, indeed!" agreed her companion, favouring her with a stare from his dark eyes, and wondering if she thought him fool enough not to see the skilful blending of *poudre mache* and bloom of roses that decorated her face.

"Mrs. Rivers, won't you give us the pleasure of hearing you to-night?" asked Lady Peyton, crossing over to the sofa where her two guests sat, with the intention of dislodging them, for she did not at all approve of pronounced flirtations, and knew it would be fatal to her little matrimonial plan if Penrith were to attach himself as the fast widow's devoted cavalier.

"I shall be very pleased. But I am not in good voice, so excuse me if I break down," simpered Mrs. Rivers, as she made her way to the piano, followed, to Lady Peyton's intense dismay, by Penrith, who turned the leaves, and listened, standing beside, while she sang, "Golden Love" in a high treble, and generally murdered that charming song.

"Very pretty ballad that," remarked Sir William, when she had finished. He felt he must say something as host, but being a truthful man could not compliment her on the beauty and sweetness of her voice.

"Glad you liked it!" she answered, rather shortly, with a smile that ended in a frown, as Noel, in obedience to a sign from his hostess, crossed over to a little table where she was sitting with Lord Farrow and Edith, looking at some sketches and photographs.

"Here are some views of Venice, Mr. Penrith. We got them when we were there last autumn, and of Florence, Rome, and several other southern places. They may interest you, as you have spent so much time in them."

"Thanks! I am sure they will," and he took the sketches and studied them with apparent interest, while Mrs. Rivers from the music stool, which to her just then was a veritable stool of repentance, shot glances of apprehension at her coveted quarry, and strove vainly to listen with polite attention to her host's conversation, which was chiefly about horses and cattle, fat pigs, and prize sheep, mangy wartzels, and turnips, oats and barley, top dressing, surface drainage, and other things that were totally uninteresting to her.

"What a glorious place Venice must be," said Edith, as she looked at a photograph of the Doge's Palace by moonlight. "How much I should like to go there!"

"Have you never been?" inquired the Duke's son, with an air of tender interest.

"No, never."

"Then I can assure you that there is a treat in store for you," remarked Penrith, enthusiastically, addressing her for the first time. "You will enjoy seeing it thoroughly. It is a grand old place, with its streets of rippled waves, its graceful gondolas, its magnificent buildings, and romantic associations. One can go there over and over again, and never tire of it; at least, I never do."

"Indeed!"

Miss Lister only ejaculated the one word, but she managed to throw a wonderful amount of expression into the dissyllable, arching her delicately marked brows at the same time, and favouring him with a cool stare which as much as said, "Who was addressing you?" and which made him feel as she meant it should—snubbed and sat upon, and uncomfortable to no small degree.

A flush spread over his dusky face at the rebuff, and he was careful, for the rest of the evening, not to address his conversation to the sister of his hostess.

"Well, how did I get on?" he asked, as Marjory ran into her room, as she sat brushing her long hair before retiring for the night.

"Pretty well for a beginning," returned Miss Rainham. "His face was delightful when you snubbed him. He turned as red as though someone had boxed him on both cheeks, and looked awfully astonished."

"He did, rather! He isn't accustomed to being snubbed—"

"No," broke in the other, "I should think not! Did you ever see anything more disgusting than the way Mrs. Rivers languished at him; and he seemed to like it—actually seemed to like it? That woman is a toad, Edith, or was one in her former state!"

"My dear!"

"She was, I'm sure! Though, of course, toads don't paint, and blacken their eyes, and towse their hair, and pinch their waists till they can hardly breathe, and wear shoes several sizes too small for them, and dye, and plaster, and make themselves up until they are odious to look at, and a great deal more horrible than nature intended them to be. Still she has the cold, cruel eyes of a batrachian reptile, and that is what I take my inference from."

"Really? You are learned! And what may a batrachian animal be?"

"A reptile pertaining to the frog or toad order," rejoined Marjory, with an air of great wisdom and gravity.

"Indeed! Well, I think you are rather hard on the poor little soul."

"Do you? I don't. She is a horror, and I wonder Marian asks her here!"

"She was invited here because she is amusing, and every hostess knows that men must be amused by frivolous, chatty women in a country house at times. For instance, take a wet day with twenty male guests, what could Marian do with them? They couldn't all play at billiards. Very few men, who are ardent sportsmen, care for chess and those sort of amusements, and battledore and shuttlecock in the picture gallery is a game, as a rule, not much affected by men over twenty, unless they are very good-natured fellows, like Lord Farrow. You see she will be of great use on an occasion of that sort, as all is fish that comes to her net; and if she can't manage to get Mr. Penrith to flirt with her in a quiet corner of the library, she will be just as sweet, just as tender and confiding to Major Charteris, Captain Beauchamp, or any other eligible man who may chance to be staying here. I think Marian was quite right to ask her, as it is not every woman who will make herself cheap and flirt with men on a rainy day, to amuse them and oblige her hostess; and setting all that aside, it is a charity—a downright charity—because one of the numerous little affairs may end in something serious, and obtain for her the prize she covets—a well-to-do husband."

"I object to that more than to anything else about her! She has no right to come husband-hunting at a respectable house!"

"Oh! yes, she has!" laughed Edith. "All is fair in love and war; and remember her penniless condition and many debts!"

"That's no excuse for the shameless way in which she tries to entrap men!"

"I consider it is. You can't understand it, of course, as you will come into twelve hundred a-year shortly, and will never have any need to aangle or entrap men; but with her it is a matter of life or death."

"Perhaps so; and she will make catching Noel Penrith a matter of life or death. She will interfere with our plans there, and be a dangerous rival for you in the gaining of his affections."

"Will she? I am not afraid of her!" and Miss Lister threw back the magnificent hair that fell about her like a veil, and glanced for a moment at the reflection of her beautiful colourless face in the glass. "No, I am not afraid; and now run away, Marjory, I must get some beauty sleep to-night."

CHAPTER III.

In spite of her anxiety about her beauty sleep, Miss Lister looked remarkably well the next morning as she stood on the steps talking to Lord Farrow, her riding-habit gathered up over her arm, her little hands covered with white gauntlet gloves, and the most bewitching of top hats perched on her chestnut-tressed head.

"A very handsome woman!" thought Penrith, as he came round from the stables with Sir William, and noted her graceful attitude and perfect get-up, "yet hardly a pleasant one—too proud and cold."

Nevertheless, he would not at all have objected to ride with her, and cast a glance of envy at Farrow as he assisted her to mount, and then rode off by her side.

"Aren't you coming, Mrs. Rivers?" he asked, as that lady appeared for the first time that morning, as it was one of her rules never to get up until, as somebody once said, the world was well afield.

"No, unfortunately I can't ride, so I shall lose the delight of a canter this bright morning."

"What a pity! You ought to learn. I will teach you if you like. The other horse I have down here, Rufus, is very quiet, and will carry a lady."

"Oh! thanks. It is very kind of you. I shall be delighted," gushed the widow, feeling she dared not refuse an offer which might lead

to several hours being spent alone with Noel, but at the same time experiencing a tremor, for she was an arrant little coward, and afraid of horses.

"As soon as you can get your habit, then, the lessons shall commence. *Au revoir*," and waving his hand he galloped away, and soon overtook Marjory and Joe, who were ambling along slowly some fifty yards in the rear of Lord Farrow and Miss Lister, while Mrs. Rivers went up to her room and wrote off to Redfern to make her a habit at once, wondering dismally as she did so how it would be paid for if Noel Penrith did not make her mistress of himself and his large fortune.

Meanwhile the riding party went on through the glow and brilliance of the August day, over moors where the heather was purpling, down shady lanes flanked by bloom-decked hedges, by summer fields where the golden corn stood glinting and shimmering ready for the reaper's hand, and the scarlet poppies flaunted their gay blossoms in the warm sunshine, and the sky was clear and cloudless. A slight haze lent a charm to the distant landscape, where the succession of hills, lifting their tall crests beyond hills, and ravines fringed with foliage, with just a peep of the blue tossing ocean to the left, made a picture that was well worth studying.

The air was full of mellow fragrance, the scent of ripening fruit and grain, and sweet sounds. All nature seemed to be rejoicing, from the sky-haunting lark to the gay-coated grasshopper. The air was exhilarating, existence a pleasure, and the party from the Manor, as they rode on through highways and by-ways, were by no means indifferent to the rustic beauties around them.

"Where are we going, Miss Rainham?" inquired Penrith, after a time, which he had employed by making himself so extremely agreeable and attentive to Marjory, that that vain little person was much mollified and somewhat flattered, and began to think, after all, he wasn't quite such a monster as she had thought him.

"First to St. Cuthbert's Well in Drossington Wood, and then as we come back Mr. Peyton is going to see how the young pheasants are getting on. Sir William is always anxious about them."

"Yes," chimed in Joe, with a laugh, "for three months before the first of October I don't believe my brother gets one night's good rest. He is so anxious about the success or failure of his 'big shoot' and the rearing of the baby pheasants."

"Indeed!" remarked Noel. "And what is the attraction at the well?" he continued, again addressing himself to Marjory.

"It is a wishing well. Anyone who drinks the water and wishes at the same time is sure to get their wish within the year."

"And do you believe that?" asked the young man, glancing with some curiosity at the dark, *mignon* face beside him.

"Most assuredly I do!" replied Miss Rainham, with the utmost gravity.

"She is half Irish, Penrith, and that accounts for her superstition and her wilful ways!" laughed her youthful lover.

"Joe, how dare you asperse my character? I've a great mind to give you a thrashing!" and she lifted her dainty little whip threateningly.

"Do!" he whispered, bending forward in the saddle till his lips almost touched her ear. "Do, and I'll kiss you adzzen times for it when we get home."

"Pooh!" she answered, using her favourite expression to denote her sovereign contempt, and making a derisive *mow* at him, after which ebullition she turned her back on him, and devoted her whole attention to her other cavalier until they arrived at the well.

"We can't dismount—how can we drink of these wonderful waters?" said Miss Lister, as they all reined up in a dim, moss-grown dell, where a silver stream of water welled up from the rocks.

"I can," cried Peyton, springing with won-

derful agility off the fat cob he bestrode. "Punch will stand still."

And the docile animal did, while his master picked his way carefully over the green, slimy stones, and filled the collapsible cup he had brought.

"You ought to wish," observed Lord Farrow, as Edith took the cup Joe offered her.

"Ought I?"

"Certainly," struck in Marjory. "Think of what you most wish for in the whole world."

"I have thought. I wish," and as she spoke for a moment her eyes rested on Noel Penrith's face, and then she drank the cool, clear draught.

"What lovely eyes!" thought Noel, as he met the glance of those long-fringed, limpid grey orbs. "Pity they don't belong to a woman with a heart and some little life about her."

"You must wish!" she went on, when it came to Lord Farrow's turn to partake of the magic waters.

"I shall be only too glad to do so," he said, eagerly, with a look at her that brought a faint pink tinge to her cheek. "But I am afraid it won't be any use. I have been wishing for one thing for a whole year, and fear I am no nearer the attainment of my wish now than I was then," and he ended with a sigh.

"Don't give it up yet. Patience and perseverance overcome all difficulties," was Marjory's consoling advice.

"I don't mean to give up while I have the ghost of a chance," muttered the young man, as Joe vaulted into the saddle, and they set out on their homeward way.

"That's right. 'Faint heart, etc.' and then she reined back her horse to Joe's, and let the other three ride on in front, which they did, and one of the three was not at all well pleased at the arrangement, and thought that the old saying, "Two's company, three's none," a very good one.

Not that Lord Farrow had much to be jealous of, for Miss Lister hardly addressed a single sentence to her right-hand cavalier; though she chatted graciously with the duke's son, still he would have preferred having her all to himself.

But some influence stronger than his will drew Penrith to her side. He couldn't tell what it was, for he thought her manner repellent, and her beauty, though undeniable, of too cold and haughty a type. It was strange and bewildering, and it made him quite callous and indifferent to Nelson Jarrold's black looks.

Perhaps the very fact of her evident indifference charmed him. He had received so much adulation that the change was novel and pleasing. Whatever it was, he kept his place, even when they reached the home preserves, where they dismounted, some of the under-keepers coming out to hold their horses, and went in to see the number of birds Sir William's keepers would have to turn down for his "big shoot" in the following October.

They walked round slowly, examining the rows of boxes and hen-coops, and watching the young pheasants as they pecked and pottered about in the grass, or among the twigs arranged for them to disport themselves in.

"Everything going on satisfactorily?" inquired Joe.

"Yessir, everythink," responded Bates, the head gamekeeper. "Them birds 'll be grand—jist grand, tho' I says it myself as oughtn't, as I've had the rearin' of 'em. And many's the night I've sat up and watched 'em, to see 'em secure and comfortable, and fed punctual. Sir William needn't fear. They'll be plentiful enough this year."

"He will be glad of that. I shall tell him all is well."

"Yessir."

"Look at that poor creature! What a state of anxiety she seems to be in!" remarked Miss Lister, in a pitying tone, as they turned to leave, pointing at an old barn-door hen, who kept poking her head through the bars of the coop, and clucking loudly, in her desperate

endeavours to recall the wild brood she had hatched to the safe shelter of their birthplace.

"By Jove! I wonder if she *has* any feeling?" reflected Penrith, "or is that prettily expressed pity assumed for our edification?"

He was answered a few days later.

Miss Lister was coming across the garden to the house, and little Mysie seeing her ran to meet her aunt, and tripped falling heavily to the ground. In a moment Edith was at her side, and taking the weeping child in her arms caressed it tenderly, a wonderful look of love softening the beautiful, proud face, and lingering in the grey eyes.

"Happy the man who wins such a look as that from her," muttered Penrith, who was watching the scene from the terrace, and hastened to offer assistance.

"Let me carry Mysie, Miss Lister?"

"No thank you. I will carry her."

"But she is too heavy for you."

"Not at all. She will be quieter with me. I am accustomed to her weight," and with a stately bend of her graceful head, she passed on with her sobbing burden, pressing the curly, golden head to her breast, and whispering pretty nonsense to the little sufferer.

For a minute or two Narcissus, as Marjory had nicknamed him, stood gazing after the tall, lithe figure, and then, with something very like a sigh, he went over to the lime, under whose bracing leaves sat Mrs. Rivers, in the daintiest of dainty tea-gowns, with the obese poodle on her knee, and the big fan near at hand.

"Miss Lister seems to be fond of children," he remarked, after a little small talk. "I think it a good trait in a woman's character."

"The very best!" replied the widow, impressively. "A woman who does not care for children must be bad, heartless, worthless! It is our duty to love the tiny angels given to our care, and the instinct of motherhood is strong in every true, sweet woman's breast. Ah! if you only knew how I longed and sighed and prayed for the touch of baby fingers on my hands, the lisp of baby voices in my ear. But, alas! the pains and joys of motherhood were denied me!" she concluded, with a heavy sigh and a sentimental air.

"Ah! really, very sad indeed!" muttered Noel, rather astonished and overcome at this burst of sentimentality from a woman who was worldly from the crown of her fluffy-tressed head to the sole of her satin-shod little foot, and who, it was evident, would have voted babies an insufferable bore, and have relegated them without mercy to the charge of hirslings, and the comforts of a mother-neglected nursery.

"I don't know, though," she went on after a while, watching him furtively from under her light lashes, "that Miss Lister *really* cares for children."

"Don't you? Why?" he demanded, in a disappointed tone. "She seems to be very fond of Mysie and Lionel. Most devoted to them."

"Yes, she *seems* so; but that is all, I think."

"Why what do you mean?"

"It may be to her interest to appear intensely fond of them. Of course it pleases Sir William."

"Well, what of that?"

"What of that?" echoed Mrs. Rivers, sneeringly. "What of that? Why it ensures her a home, wins her warm welcome here—here in a house where money is plentiful—and also luxuries that would never make her life pleasant elsewhere, as she couldn't afford them. She is penniless, absolutely penniless"—the widow was waxing spiteful, consequently slightly untruthful—"without a brass farthing, so she finds it answers very well to fawn on her rich brother-in-law, make much of his children, and thus earn for herself comfortable quarters!"

"You surprise me," said Noel, rather coldly; "Miss Lister dresses with such exquisite taste, and so well, that I was quite under the im-

pression that she had some money of her own."

"The impression was an erroneous one. The fine gowns she wears are presents from Lady Peyton. She could never afford to buy that beautiful Irish point which trimmed the robe she wore last night."

"No, I suppose not, as she is penniless."

"No, nor that grand set of sables, that came from Cook's a week ago. She is like the person in the Bible, I forget who, as I don't read it often," she continued, with a metallic, artificial, particularly unpleasant laugh, "who had not a place wherein to lay his head. Neither has she, except such as are provided by the charity of her friends."

"That is rather sad," observed the young man, reflectively. "Every woman ought to have some sort of a home of her own. Why doesn't she marry?"

"It is not *her* fault, nor that of Lady Peyton, that she has not entrapped some rich man long ago," rejoined his companion, significantly.

"If she has tried I wonder at her not succeeding, for she possesses a rare loveliness."

"Perhaps her efforts are too apparent."

This was said with an immense amount of envy, hatred, and malice.

"Hardly in the case of Lord Farrow. He is evidently deeply in love, and she does not encourage him much, if at all."

"Of course not. Don't you see the reason?"

"No."

"He is the Duke of Earnshaw's third son. If he were the eldest she would smile very sweetly on him, in order to win the strawberry leaves and become your grace."

"I think you are *wrong*," said Penrith, gravely, as he rose to go, not over well pleased at the amount of spleen and jealousy exhibited by the *pastie* widow against her hostess's sister. "I do not believe Miss Lister would give her hand to any man unless she gave her heart as well!"

"Pshaw!—nonsense! She would marry anyone with a long rent-roll."

"I am not of that opinion," he returned with great coldness, as he left her and went towards the house.

"Shows what a fool you are!" she muttered furiously between her teeth; for she felt she had made a step in the wrong direction, a regular *fauz pas*, and she was wrathful accordingly—so wrathful, that she actually shook the unfortunate poodle savagely as she put him on the ground, and swept up to her room to array herself in gorgeous attire for dinner, and try and regain lost ground.

But her efforts were useless, and her filmy black gown, with its artistic adornment of blood-red pomegranate flowers, was wasted on the desert air—in other words, Noel Penrith never came near her once during the evening, and she had to be satisfied with the attention she received from Major Charteris, an elderly man with a wonderful brown wig, and a disagreeable habit of shouting out, "Eh—what?" before the unfortunate person he was addressing had time to answer his question, and Mr. Devereux, a widower, with a large estate, the manifold attractions of which were counterbalanced in Mrs. Rivers' eyes by the fact that he was the father of three large daughters as well, all rising thirty, and eager to marry themselves, though not so eager to allow their father to "go and do likewise."

Noel Penrith that evening hovered unceasingly about Edith, greatly to the annoyance of Lord Farrow, Captain Beauchamp, and some other gay maskers, who had come for a shot at the grouse, and who were quite ready in the meantime to worship at the shrine of beauty, and bask in the light of a pair of lovely eyes.

"Won't you sing?" asked Farrow, hoping he might be able by a strategic movement to get her all to himself for a time.

"Not to-night, if you will excuse me," she answered, a little wearily.

"But we cannot excuse you," he said, with

his usual tender air, which somehow or other made Noel feel irritated and annoyed.

"I am afraid you must."

"Won't you even favour us with one song, Miss Lister?" pleaded the master of Penrith Castle, a smile on his dark face, which lit it up, and made him wonderfully handsome.

"Do you wish it?" she questioned, in a low tone, lifting her eyes to his.

"I do, indeed!" he answered in an equally low voice. "You're singing has a peculiar charm for me!"

"In that case, I will gratify your wish. What shall it be?"

He chose "Absent yet present," which she rendered in her usual finished style, and then turning, she asked him to sing.

"I know you do," she added with another soft look straight up into his eyes, a look that made his heart bound and his pulses throb. "Mrs. Rivers has told me so."

"Yes, I do a little," he admitted, reluctantly. "But I don't profess to be a singer."

"That is all the better. Now what will you try?"

"This," he answered, taking "With the sunshine and the swallows" from her hand, and placing it on the piano. "Will you accompany me?"

She assented at once, and played the opening bars. Then his voice, a fine baritone, rang through the room.

"And my heart will not be quiet,
But in a 'purple riot'
Keeps ever madly beating,
At the thought of that sweet meeting;
When my beloved cometh home to me."

"Mr. Penrith sings with great feeling, don't you think so?" asked the widow of Captain Beauchamp, who had come to sit beside her.

"Oh, yes! I suppose so," rejoined the linesman, carelessly. "He certainly sang with great energy, as though he really meant it. I suppose he is going to become another captive of Miss Lister's?"

But the widow maintained a stony silence. Not even to herself would she acknowledge that her coveted prize was slipping from her grasp; and the gay captain, finding her dull and uninteresting, left her at last, and settled down by one of the Devereux girls.

Later that evening, as Edith sat out on the little balcony before her window enjoying the balmy coolness of the summer night, she heard the tread of heavy feet on the terrace walk beneath, and the murmur of masculine voices.

"Yes, she is very lovely!" she heard Beauchamp say. "But a dangerous woman—very dangerous!"

"Dangerous! What is there dangerous about her!" asked another; and, she recognised the voice as Penrith's.

"Well, she has the *je ne sais quoi*, a nameless charm. Her beauty, too, grows on a fellow in such a way that he is hopelessly in love with her before he has any idea of it, and utterly at her mercy!"

"Indeed!" ejaculated Noel, with a laugh that sounded to the listener slightly sarcastic. "I don't think I should ever be hopelessly in love with a woman, and not know it."

"I am not so sure of that!" rejoined his companion. "And take care in the present case, my friend, or you will be a victim to her matchless beauty, and your belief in your own powers of resistance."

"Hardly! I don't think I shall ever be at any woman's mercy!"

And then they passed on, and Miss Lister with a shiver, which shook her slender frame from head to foot, went into her room, and drew the curtains across the window, and buried her face, which was strangely pale, in her hands, and remained thus till the grey light of early dawn stole dimly in.

CHAPTER IV.

The days wore on quickly and merrily at Peyton Manor. The twelfth came, and Sir William and his guests were out early on the purple moors, and knocked over many

many brace of grouse and black game; as most of them were ardent sportsmen and some of them crack shots.

Among the latter Penrith ranked. Yet somehow or other, during those golden August days, his aim was far from sure or steady, and he made nothing like the bag that Beauchamp, Farrow, Aspinall, and even the elderly Beau Charteris managed to get.

Something seemed to come between him and the birds, as he raised his gun to his shoulder; the glint of chestnut tresses, and the remembrance of a cheek of waxen pallor, made him half blind and wholly careless. As he went, stumbling knee-deep among the heather on the wind-swept moors, he carried with him always the memory of the tender look from a pair of lovely grey eyes; a look that had made his heart beat in a "purple riot," and his brain reel and swim, as it had never done before; a look that he longed and hungered to see again, at any pain and any cost to himself, if it were only once—once more, in his whole lifetime. He, once the most ardent of sportsmen, was never ready, long ere the last red streak of sunset glow faded from the skies, to return to the Manor. He was never among the last to arrive in the library, where tea was dispensed by Lady Peyton; and where the gentlemen were allowed to come for their cheering and refreshing cup, in shooting coats and thick boots, and signs of the toil of the day thick upon them; but was invariably one of the first, and would drop into an easy chair beside Edith, and talk to her in a low tone, utterly oblivious of the withering glances and heartbroken sighs with which Mrs. Rivers alternately favoured him.

Truth to tell, he had not behaved quite well to the little woman. In his infatuation for Edith he had quite forgotten his promise to teach her to ride, and the smart habit the London tailor had sent was lying upstairs in a box, and was never likely to be donned by the frisky widow, or to be of the smallest use to her; but then that didn't matter much, as it was equally likely that it would never be paid for. Penrith didn't think he had acted badly, as he really was not a concited man, and had no idea that Mrs. Rivers was doing her best to entrap him. His thoughts were of other things, chiefly about Edith.

"It is extraordinary," he would say to himself, "strange and extraordinary what an influence this woman exercises over me! I am drawn to her side against my will, and my better judgment. I care more for her opinion than I do for anyone else's, and feel that I would give almost my hope of another life in a better sphere to kiss those sweet lips."

It would be nearly impossible to describe his feelings at that time. He did not like Miss Lister's haughty tones and cut manner, and the way in which at times she relentlessly snubbed him. He would make up his mind twenty times in a week to quit her vicinity and go to his lonely, sea-washed Cornish Castle, and never see her again; but this resolve would vanish into thin air, at one kind glance from the deep, grey eyes, one tender smile from the rosy mouth. And at intervals, rare intervals, rare as the angels' visits, he got both tender smile and kind glance from this woman who, to him, whatever she might have been to others, was a sort of problem in petticoats; for once or twice, on looking up suddenly, he had found her eyes on him, with such an expression in their limpid depths, that made him think she must love him, and then ten minutes after she would ignore his presence altogether, or speak to him in such freezing tones that he was glad when she turned her back on him and allowed Lord Farrow or Captain Beauchamp to monopolize her attention. But he could not resist the charm of her wonderful white loveliness, and went to his fate in a blind, headlong way, as many a good man has done before.

"Are you alone, Miss Lister?"
Penrith's voice fell suddenly on her ear, and made her start violently. She was sitting in the octagonal boudoir, a beautiful room all

panelled in purple velvet and gold, with a heavy tracery of gold leaves round the cornice and the doors, and running up the walls; the ceiling had been painted by a celebrated Italian artist, and represented Venus in a sea shell drawn by Cupids. Strewn about was costly *bric-a-brac* and rare china, and in the priceless vases were pale roses and stately dahlias. It was a fitting shrine for a lovely woman, and Edith looked more than lovely, her clear-cut profile thrown out into strong relief by the background of heavy velvet drapery.

She had been thinking, sitting there in the dim twilight, watching the day die down in the western sky, flushed with the last rosy glow of sunset, and a dreamy look was in her eyes, as she gazed at Noel.

"Are you alone?" he repeated, looking in at the window, round which the vine-leaves clustered thickly.

"Yes," she answered, slowly and reluctantly, "I am alone."

"Then may I come and share your solitude?" and without waiting for permission, he stepped lightly through the long French window, and stood before her.

She made a half movement to rise, and then sank back among the soft cushions of the easy chair, in which she reclined, turning strangely pale, for she felt a crisis was at hand. For some days Penrith had been trying to entrap her into a *lise-d-tête*, and she had successfully avoided it, but now she knew she must listen to what he had to say, that there was no escape for her.

"Have I offended you?" he asked, looking down at her.

"No, why do you ask?"

"Because you have avoided me lately, and have been, I fancy, more cold towards me."

"I was not aware of it."

Her manner was icy and repellent; she was trying to stave off the declaration she saw was coming.

"Perhaps not, yet it has been painfully apparent to me. Your coldness makes me tremble for myself."

"Indeed! Then you cannot be a very brave man."

"Love, Miss Lister, like a guilty conscience, makes cowards of us all!"

"Indeed!" she said again, struggling hard for composure, and tearing her lace handkerchief to fragments in her agitation, "I never heard that before."

"Then let me tell you now," he said, gently, taking her hand in his, "what a coward my love has made of me—"

"No, no, don't!" she interrupted, giving one entreating glance at the handsome face above her, and trying to draw away her hand.

"I have feared to speak of my affection lest you might think me presumptuous and daring—feared that I might startle you, and that you would refuse to become my cherished, dearly-loved wife, and even withdraw from me what I possess now and prize so much, your friendship."

He paused for a moment, as though expecting her to speak, but she was silent and quiet, and did not try to release her fingers from his clasp.

"I have been faint-hearted," he went on, after a while, "but I have taken courage now, and I dare to plead my cause with you. Once or twice I have fondly thought I was not utterly indifferent to you, and that has helped to make me brave. Tell me, am I?"

He bent down and tried to look into her eyes, but she turned her eyes away from him.

"Edith, dearest, answer me! Was I wrong in thinking I am not entirely indifferent to you?"

His words spoken so tenderly had a strange effect on her; they banished the spell his winning, high-bred voice was casting over her, and brought to her memory Marjory's unlucky words.—

"He would never ask a woman to be his wife unless he was pretty certain of her saying 'yes.'"

She rose to her feet perfectly calm and collected and drew her hand from his, saying at the same time in quiet, cutting tones,—

"I regret to say that you were wrong."

"Wrong, Edith!" he ejaculated, his face becoming deathly pale under all its healthy sun-brown. "Wrong! Do you not care for me?"

"No!"

The word was short, sharp, cruel; he staggered under it as though from a blow.

"You can't mean that," he said, at last, rather faintly. "Only reflect, think what my love for you is! more to me than life! Give me a little hope. I will wait any time if you will come to me in the future. I can bear the dreariness of the years that must intervene."

"Impossible! I can give you no hope."

"You surely can't mean that," he repeated. "After what has passed between us, the encouragement you have given me, the hopes you have awakened, you can't mean to cast me off in this way?"

"I have given you no encouragement," she rejoined, with stinging contempt. "Your vanity has led you astray strangely. It is unparalleled impertinence on your part to imagine that I cared for you, or that it would please me to become your wife. How dare you insinuate such a thing?" she went on, looking at him with eyes full of wrath.

"Edith—I—listen to me."

"No, I will not listen to you. Your proposal is an insult, simply an insult from a man who has declared openly that he would never woo a woman unless she gave him to understand plainly that she would feel grateful and obliged for the honour. I am neither the one nor the other."

"I see you are not," he said, quietly, biting his lip till the blood started, to steady its quivering. "I have made a mistake."

"You have—a very great mistake."

"My hopes are quite in vain?"

"Utterly and entirely. Nothing on earth would induce me to marry you. I fling you back your love with the contempt it merits."

"Thank you, Miss Lister. And this is your answer?"

"Yes. Does it satisfy you?"

"It more than satisfies me. I am quite content," he answered, with exceeding bitterness. "I shall not trouble you with my obnoxious ill-starred love in the future," and turning he left the room as he came.

For a minute or two Miss Lister stood, gazing stonily before her, then with a low moan of anguish she dropped on her knees, and buried her face in the soft cushions of the chair.

She had sold her heart's birthright for a miserable mess of pottage—gratified pride—and the gratification was likely to cost her dear. She knew now, in this hour of the triumph of her pride, and defeat of her love, that her heart belonged solely and wholly to Noel Penrith, and the dismal conviction was creeping over her that it would never return to her keeping, and she wept bitterly as she had never wept before, at the ruin of her hopes, the ending of her love-dream.

Edith was rather late at breakfast the following morning. She had passed a sleepless night, and when she came down, as bad luck would have it, the only chair vacant was one next Penrith, and she was obliged to take it. He, however, seemed to have recovered his usual nonchalance, and was quite equal to the occasion. He wished her "good morning," gave her a liberal help of pigeon pie, passed her coffee cup, and crowned it all by making some remark about the weather.

Miss Lister, usually so cold and self-possessed, trembled and changed colour, and wished herself anywhere but beside her rejected lover.

"I'm sorry you must go, Noel," remarked Sir William, during breakfast, in a clear, loud voice.

"Yes, so am I; but business must be attended to."

"Of course. Couldn't your steward do it, though?"

"Well, he might; still, I generally superintend these sort of matters myself."

"You are quite right. I hope, at any rate, that you won't go till to-morrow?"

"If you wish it, I can manage to stay till then!"

"Edith," said her ladyship, abruptly, as they were left alone for a few minutes, "you have refused Noel Penrith?"

"And what if I have?" she asked, defiantly.

"What!" replied her sister, somewhat astonished by her manner. "Why, I think you are the most foolish girl in the United Kingdom, and a very heartless one as well, for you led him on step by step, and have rejected as honest and true a love as ever was offered to woman. He worships the ground you tread on, and when I saw him this morning and he told me he must leave I knew it was *your* doing. You have disappointed me—disappointed me sadly. I never thought you could act in this unwomanly way. He is too good and noble to have received such treatment at any woman's hands," and, for the first time in her life, Lady Peyton looked rather coldly at her beautiful sister, and Edith, taking little Mysie by the hand, went out to a remote part of the terrace, and leaning there looked at the blue distant hills, while "slowly the brimming tears gathered and fell," splashing on her clasped hands.

"Auntie's kying," announced her niece to Marjory, as that wilful young lady joined them.

"Crying! Good gracious! Edith, what is the matter?"

"I am crying to expiate my sins and for my folly."

"What folly?"

"The bad way in which I have treated Mr. Penrith."

"What has he done?"

"He has proposed to me."

"And you—you haven't refused him, surely?"

"Yes, I have."

"Edith, you have never been so foolish!"

"Yes, I have, and why do you call me foolish? You told me of all his shortcomings, and advised me to lure him on to love me."

"I did, I did," acknowledged Marjory, dolefully, "but I have found out since that I was wrong. He is neither a 'wretch' nor a 'cad,' but a gentlemanly, nice fellow, and I saw he adored you, and thought you would care for him, and that you had given up all idea of carrying out that foolish plan. Why, you haven't said a word about it for the last month! I quite thought you had relinquished all thoughts of it."

"I wish I had," said Miss Lister, with a sigh. "I should be much happier now if I had."

"I wish so, too. He is so good. I am horribly angry with myself for having misunderstood his jesting words. Who do you think it was headed the list for the Drossington burnt-out cottagers with five hundred pounds? Mr. Penrith. And he's given another two hundred towards the restoration of Peyton Church, and the Darrells, who live near his place in Cornwall, say all his people simply worship him, and all run to greet him for—"

"Oh! don't, don't!" cried Miss Lister, covering her ears with her hands, "it is coals of fire heaped upon my head to hear the man I have scorned and rejected, and lost by my folly for ever, praised, and all his good qualities brought to light now when it is too late!"

"I daresay it's hard," said Miss Rainham, rather cruelly, considering she had been the cause of all the mischief, "but it's not more than you deserve, and—What is Joe running about in that mad style for, I wonder?" she concluded, abruptly, as her future spouse came out of the home-park, and ran towards the house as hard as he could. "What is it Joe?"

what is the matter?" asked his intended, as she went to meet him.

"Willie has met with an accident!"

"An accident! What has happened to him?" asked both Edith and Marjory together.

"He was riding down the Drossington road, when his horse suddenly stumbled and fell, throwing him violently to the ground."

"Is he much hurt?"

"He is insensible at present, and we don't quite know the extent of his injuries, but we fear his leg is broken. Penrith and some of the others are bringing him up. You must go and see about getting a room ready, while I break it to Marian;" and without more ado the young fellow went straight to Lady Peyton's morning-room, and told her of the accident, the news of which she received with outward calmness, though with a terrible inward fear, for she knew Sir William was a heavy man, and that such a fall might end fatally.

Her worst fears, however, were not realised. On examination it was found that the Baronet had broken his right leg and dislocated his shoulder. Beyond those the injuries were slight, and as the leg was skilfully set he soon began to mend, and his wife's mind was set at rest.

His accident, however, caused some difference in the arrangements at the Manor. Penrith stayed on at the earnest request of his friend, and because he did not like to leave when he was in a critical state; but most of the other guests left, including Mrs. Rivers and her fat poodle. She left it not as she came though, for she went away the affianced wife of Mr. D'vereux. She had given up all hope of catching Noel, and, therefore, had promised to take her elderly admirer, with his large estate and his large daughters.

So those that remained at the Manor were Edith, who could not of course leave her sister in her time of trouble, Marjory, who being Sir William's ward always made the Manor her home, Joe because Marjory was there, and Penrith, who stayed much against his will, because the sick man seemed to crave so much for his society.

CHAPTER V.

The days wore away slowly, but surely, to some at Peyton Manor, and among these was Miss Lister. It was simply agony to her to meet daily, nay, hourly, the man she had rejected with such unmerited scorn and contempt. Her punishment was almost more than she could bear; she suffered the bitterness of death, when she met the glance of his eye, cold and meaningless, instead of full of passionate adoration as it had been.

His manner was perfect to her before others, easy and unembarrassed—he never noticed, or seemed to notice, the quivering of her lips when he spoke to her, or the paling of her cheek to ashen white, and its sudden flush at times; he was perfectly polite, and utterly indifferent; he ignored entirely their past pleasant intercourse, and its unlucky ending, consigning it to the limbo of oblivion. And what is more galling to a woman than to be forgotten by the man to whom she was once all the world?

That she was forgotten, to all intents and purposes, and that she was also unforgiven, Edith was sure of, for he never spoke to her save before others. He was cold and hard as marble when alone with her, and that checked her timid longing to ask for his pardon and plead for peace—only peace between them.

One day she managed to summon courage and speak to him on the subject. He had come in from shooting, and made his way straight to the library for his usual cup of afternoon tea; she was kneeling on the hearthrug before the fire, for the late September days were getting chill and damp, and at first he did not see her, but the moment his eyes fell on the kneeling figure he rose to go.

"Mr. Penrith," she faltered, "will—you stay?—I—"

"Stay?" he interrupted, with contemptuous surprise. "No. Why should I stay?"

"Because—I—I—have something to say to you."

"To say to me? Impossible, Miss Lister, you must have made a mistake. You can have nothing to say to me!"

And without waiting for her to speak again he turned and left the room, and Edith buried her face in the fleecy hearth-rug, and wept bitter tears of regret and repentance.

"I am afraid I have done a great deal of mischief about Mr. Penrith," said Marjory, rather diamally, to her fiancé, a few days later, as they paced up and down the grey, moss-grown terrace-walk, before the house.

"I think you have, indeed, madame," rejoined Joe, severely.

"Edith received a bad impression about him, all through me and that venomous little Rivers toad. Had it not been for that, she might have loved and married him."

"She might have married him, but I am not so sure about the love."

"I am, and what is more, I'm sure she's in love with him now."

"Stuff! Women don't snub and act badly towards men they love. That theory's a rubbishy one. She's too cold to care for him or anyone else, for the matter of that."

Master Joe managed to throw a vast amount of derision into his voice and manner, and it made Marjory long to tell him of Edith's tears and repentance, but she felt it would be rather mean to do it, so held her peace and paced along silently beside him.

"Now, Noel is in love with her still, if you like," he went on, after a while.

"He manages to conceal it extremely well, then."

"Of course he does. He is very determined, and brings his will to bear on it, and controls all outward sign, but he is not the same man. If I could believe in such a thing I should say his heart was broken."

"Then why, in the name of goodness, doesn't he try to make it up with her, and ask her to marry him again?"

"My dear Marjory, what a goose you are!" said her youthful lover, with a patriarchal air of wisdom and knowledge that was highly incensing to that young woman.

"And why am I a goose, pray?" she demanded, rather wrathfully.

"Because you know very little about men and their ways, so shouldn't talk about them."

"Oh! indeed. Perhaps it would be better if I knew nothing at all about them?" indignantly.

"Perhaps it would. A little knowledge is dangerous. But to explain to you why Noel won't try to make up his quarrel with Edith. No man likes to be snubbed. We dread it—the whole sex dreads it," and Joe flung his arms aloft, in such a frantic manner, that his companion shrank away from him somewhat. "If you scorched me I should never get over it. I should turn woman-hater on the spot, and live in a tub, like Diogenes. I'd never risk facing another fair one."

"Wouldn't you, really?"

"No, really I wouldn't, and I have no doubt that his sentiments are ditto, ditto. I am sure he proposed to her, although you keep so silent on the subject, and she must have given him pepper-pot, or he wouldn't have found it necessary to want to go and attend to some imaginary business in such a hurry. It isn't likely he would ever give her a second opportunity of declining his hand and heart. He is too proud for that."

"Yes, I am afraid so," assented Marjory, with a doleful sigh.

"Why afraid?"

"Because she loves him, and will never care for, or marry anybody else, and she'll be an old maid, and she's a great deal too lovely for that."

"Stuff! I tell you again, stuff! She is utterly indifferent to him. Her manner is ice itself."

"What would you expect it to be? Do you

think a woman cares to wear her heart on her sleeve any more than a man does?"

"I don't know what they 'care,' I only know what they do, and I guess the heart is generally very much *en évidence*, when there is a heart in the question."

"You mean to insinuate that there is not a heart in this case?"

"Most assuredly not a female one."

"And I tell you, you are wrong."

"And I tell you, I am right."

"You are not, Joe, you are wrong, and it is abominable of you to go against me in this way, when I want to undo some of the mischief I have done."

"Well, we needn't quarrel," he said, stooping to kiss her, "and I'll do anything you wish me to."

"Will you? Really?"

"Yes, I will indeed."

"You'll try to make it all right between Mr. Penrith and Edith?"

"Yes, if I get the opportunity. But he never speaks of her to me. And good-bye, little one. I must be off now. There goes Noel with a whole tribe of dogs at his heels. Only two of us for the big shoot! How sorry I am Willie can't come and help to knock over his cherished pheasants."

"Yes, it must be a cruel disappointment for him, to be confined to his room just now."

"Awful, poor fellow. Good-bye, sweetheart. Be on the terrace to greet us when we return," and, waving his hand, the young fellow seized his gun and rushed after Penrith, who, surrounded by spaniels and game-keepers, was just entering the wood.

It was a brilliant October day, a bit of "Indian summer." The sky clear and cloudless, the air fresh and exhilarating. The tawny wheat stubbles glistened like spun silk, the green was just getting flecked with gold, and here and there a dash of crimson; the hazel nuts hung in great brown inviting clusters, the honeysuckle was sparse and colourless, the rivulets were beginning to talk, and the runnels to bawl, the leaves were rustling down in showers, there was a thin blue haze lending a charm to the distant belt of hills, and everywhere were there signs of swift approaching autumn.

"This is splendid sport," said Joe, as he knocked over a fine cock pheasant, which the dogs had forced out of a ditch before him. "Beats the battue system, hollow."

"Yes, rather," agreed Penrith; "that isn't sport, it does away with all the poetry of pheasant shooting. I wonder Willie advocates it so warmly."

"Well, you see, it's the fashion, for one thing," said his brother, with a laugh. "And when you ask fashionable fops to a 'big shoot,' you must provide plenty of game for them."

"True. Still, I think quantity is no compensation for the loss of quality; and in the battue system much of the charm of field sport is destroyed without any real equivalent being gained."

"True, old man. There goes another fine fellow. This is splendid!"

And Joe really seemed to find it so, for Penrith couldn't persuade him to desist until the dusky twilight began to creep over the face of the earth.

"Well, we've bagged twenty brace. That's pretty good for two," said Peyton, as he and Noel, shouldering their guns, set out on their homeward way.

"Very good indeed," assented the latter, and then, somehow or other, conversation languished between them, and they tramped on in silence, till they came in sight of the house.

"I am going through the hedge," said Joe, then, "it's much the shortest way. I see someone on the terrace, and Marjory promised to wait for me there," and he pushed through a gap.

"Take care how you come through," he called back. "Your gun is loaded." But the warning came too late!

There was a sharp report, a heavy fall, then

a groan, and Noel Penrith lay by the hedge-side, with his white face turned up to the clear sky, where the stars were beginning to twinkle.

"Good heavens!" cried Joe, flinging aside his gun, and falling on his knees by the wounded man, "are you much hurt?"

But no answer came from the pallid lips, and with a horrible fear tugging at his heart-strings, the young man turned and ran like the wind towards the Manor.

Only Miss Lister was on the terrace as he reached it.

"Edith," he said, trying to speak quietly, "a terrible accident has happened. Penrith has shot himself. You are always calm and self-possessed; go down and stay with him, while I fetch assistance. Heliés by the hedge, in the home-field."

Miss Lister listened with horror-stricken eyes and a face from which every vestige of colour had fled; then as an arrow from a bow she sprang forward and flew, rather than walked, down the steps, across the lawn, through the garden to the home-field.

With unerring instinct she went straight to the spot, where the man she loved better than life itself lay so still, with the blood welling up from a wound in his left breast, and crimsoning the grass, and forming a ghastly pool under him.

She dropped down beside him, pillowing the heavy head on her lap, and trying to staunch the bleeding with her hands, the dawn of an awful agony at her heart, for she feared he was dead. She clasped his cold hands in hers, but there was no sign of life; and as she realised what existence would be without him, she bent down lower over the ashen face, on which the moonbeams played and wailed,—

"Noel, Noel, my beloved, my darling! Look up, speak to me. Oh! Heaven, have mercy and spare my darling."

As she spoke, the dark eyes unclosed slowly and languidly, and he looked up at the beautiful, piteous face above him. It was as though his soul had been recalled from the distant shore towards which it was wandering by the sound of her voice. It seemed to her a mute farewell, and bending still lower she kissed the rapidly chilling lips, ere he relapsed again into insensibility.

"Is he dead?" she asked, in a breathless whisper, as Joe appeared with the servants to bear him to the house.

"I fear so," he answered sadly, as he glanced at the rigid features, and without a moan or sigh Miss Lister fell unconscious beside the body of her lover.

"So, after all, she did care for him," muttered Joe. "What a pity she didn't show it before it was too late!"

* * * * *

For many weeks after that terrible day Noel Penrith's life trembled in the balance, and he hovered 'twixt life and death. He became delirious, and in his ravings showed plainly how his heart and soul were bound up in Edith. He would cry aloud for her, beseeching her to be kind to him, and not scorn him, and he would toss restlessly from side to side on his pillow, and moan grievously, until she came and held his hand, and soothed him tenderly. Her presence had a magical influence over him, and though an hospital nurse was brought from London, still the real nurse was Miss Lister.

It was fearfully painful to her to hear his incoherent ravings about herself; it was such a reproach, and yet she would hardly permit anyone to perform any service for him but herself. She wore herself to a shadow, tending him day and night. She anticipated every want, forestalled every wish, and when at last, after a day of awful agony, when the crisis came, and he was declared out of danger, the doctor said it was the constant care, and tender nursing that he had received which enabled him to pull through, and drift back slowly, but surely, to health and strength.

It gave unqualified pleasure and relief to all the inmates of the Manor to hear he was on

a fair way to recovery—to none more than to Edith. It seemed to her a sort of expiation of her folly and heartless conduct. But from the day Noel recovered consciousness, and was pronounced out of danger she never went into his room save when he slept; then she would steal in and gaze lovingly and longingly at the white, wan face so thin and worn and changed, and weep silently.

November was far advanced before the invalid was strong enough to be brought downstairs, and then he walked but slowly, leaning on a huge stick, and sometimes helped by Joe's strong arm.

"We are a pair of cripples!" he said to his host, on his first appearance downstairs after his recovery.

"Yes, indeed," assented the Baronet, with a cheery laugh, as he limped forward to meet his guest. "This broken leg is a sad thing for me. My wife is so nervous about me that she declares I mustn't don the pink for ever so long. I am afraid, therefore, that this winter will be a dull one for me."

"Yes, I should think so. I have no one to be nervous about me. I rather envy you Peyton. Upon my word I do," and he glanced at Edith, who was sitting near, and derived some pleasure from seeing a deep crimson flush mount up to her cheek and brow, and the graceful head droop.

He was rather puzzled about her. It seemed to him that he had some dim, hazy recollection of a woman bending over him and kissing him the day he shot himself, as he lay in the field, and the woman bore a remarkable likeness to Miss Lister, but then that was ridiculous, simply ridiculous he told himself with a laugh, just as ridiculous as his fancying she was near him always during the first part of his illness.

"She is hardly the sort of woman to do that kind of thing," he reflected. "It must have been a phantom form conjured up by my diseased brain that hovered near me. Besides, she hates me, so I am worse than a fool to waste a thought about it," and with a sigh he would wrench his eyes from her face, and infuse an immense amount of chilly courtesy into his manner when he addressed her.

"I am sure he loves you still," said Marjory one day, when November was drawing to a close, and the two sat together in the library discussing their tea.

"And I am sure he does not!" said her companion, sadly.

"You are wrong."

"I don't think so."

"I can see it in his eyes when he looks at you."

"He never does look at me."

"Not when you are looking at him, of course. But when he thinks you won't see him, he studies you most attentively, as though you were some rare and curious animal."

"Does he really?" asked Miss Lister, a faint blush at her cheek, for she thought he might have some knowledge of the unasked kiss she had given him in her moment of agony and terror for his life.

"Yes. And you, I hope, are not going to try and persuade me that a man looks frequently at a face he doesn't love."

"No. You are too obstinate to be persuaded."

"Thank you. I know I'm right though. And oh! Edith I do wish it would all come smooth between you, and that you could be married next spring, the same day as I am."

"Tell me," she went on, after a pause, "if he proposed to you now, would you accept him?"

"What is the use of asking me such a question? He never will ask me to marry him again."

"He may, if you are only commonly polite, and don't freeze him by your coldness."

"No, men don't invite women who have rudely rejected them to do it again. Such things only happen once in a blue moon."

"And the moon is blue," cried Marjory, excitedly. "Come and look at it," and un-

doing the window she stepped out on the terrace, followed by Edith, who threw a light shawl over her shoulders ere she stepped out into the chill air.

"You see I am right!" exclaimed Miss Rainham, triumphantly. And sure enough she was.

There was the crescent moon shining far above, looking of a pale greenish-blue colour. The sun was just sinking to rest, and the western sky was a mass of fiery orange; the fleecy clouds which hung beneath were lighted up with opalescent hues, from pink to deep purple, and in the south-west was a broad zone of rose-colour; while to the north the clear sky was of a pale greenish-blue, and beautifully transparent.

"What a lovely sunset!"

"Isn't it!" agreed Marjory; "but it's rather cold. I'll run in and get a shawl," and away she sped, and Edith found herself alone, watching the gorgeous beauty of the heavens.

By-and-by approaching footsteps warned her of her volatile companion's return, and she said dreamily, without turning her head, "I wonder if you are right, Marjory, after all, and if Noel Penrith still does care for me? I would give anything to know; but I fear it is not so. I tried once to tell him what a mistake I had made, but he stopped me in such a haughty way that I should never dare to speak to him on the subject again. My unfortunate pride would prevent me. If I told him I love him, he might take his revenge, and humiliate me, as I deserve."

"What did you say?" she queried, as Marjory mumbled something that was not very intelligible. "That he would humiliate me, if he still loves me (was that what you said?); but you see I am nearly certain that he doesn't, and so, though I long to tell him how very dear he is to me, and ask him to forgive me, I dare not do it, and he will never know how wofully I have punished myself. I am very miserable. It is torture to me to be with him daily, to see how good and noble he is, and to realise what I have lost, so I shall go away and stay with the Aspinwells," she went on after a while, in a low, sad voice; "Marian can spare me now that Willie has quite recovered, and I fear if I stay that I shall drive him away; my presence must be obnoxious to him, my going will be a relief to him. Don't you think I am right, Marjory?"

"No! most emphatically no!"

Miss Lister started as though she had been shot, and turned tremblingly, for the voice was not Marjory's, and there before her stood Noel Penrith!

"Mr. Penrith!" she murmured faintly, feeling that she would be thankful if the earth would open and swallow her up.

"Not Mr. Penrith to you," he said tenderly, as he folded her in his arms; "Noel—always Noel for the future. As a rule listeners do not hear much good of themselves, and gain little by their eavesdropping; but I have gained the greatest blessing Heaven could bestow, the knowledge that you love me."

"I—I—cannot listen to you," she faltered and for a moment withdrew herself from his embrace, and stood away—proud, haughty, defiant.

"Not after all I have suffered, and loving me as you do?" he asked, tenderly, stretching out his arms, and the proud face softened, and she was back, leaning against his breast, in an instant,

"But—you—you do not love me now! You have been so cold—so indifferent. I killed your affection, and it can never revive again."

"I do love you," he answered, gravely; "I have never ceased to do so; yet I doubted, till I heard your sweet words just now, that you cared for me. In fact, dearest, I think we have not understood one another; but all is made clear between us now. The clouds have lifted, the mist has rolled away," and stooping he kissed fondly the fair brow of the woman who was destined to be nearer and dearer to him than anyone else in the whole wide world.

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

THE REAL BOUNCING BABY.—An india-rubber doll.

A DANDY ON shore is annoying to many people, but a swell of the sea sickens everybody.

"JULIA, there is no moon. Will you meet me at the gaslight corner?" "No, John; I am no gasmetre."

THERE are three things that no man but a fool lends, or, having lent, is not in the most hopeless state of mental crassitude if he ever hopes to get back again. The three things are—books, umbrellas and money.

A BEAUTIFUL girl, coming from the field, was told by her cousin that she looked as fresh as a daisy kissed by the dew. "No, indeed," was the simple reply; "that wasn't his name."

TOMMY went fishing the other day without permission of his mother. Next morning a neighbour's son met him, and asked: "Did you catch anything yesterday, Tommy?" "Not till I got home," was the rather sad response.

A VERY THOUGHTFUL WOMAN.—A man went home the other night and found his house locked up. After infinite trouble he managed to gain entrance through a back-window, and then discovered on the parlour-table a note from his wife, reading: "I have gone out. You will find the key on the side of the step."

In the Isle of Man it is the custom of parties about to be married to carry salt in their pockets. Although we omit the saline ceremony in this country, the promise to "love, honour, and obey," is understood to be taken *cum grano salis*.

Mrs. Shoddy (to shopman): "Show me a thermometer—one of your best." Shopman: "This, ma'am, is one of our finest—Venetian glass and the best quicksilver." Mrs. Shoddy: "Silver? That would be nice for the kitching, but I want one for my boudoir. Haven't you one with quick gold?"

A GOLDEN WEDDING: A NEW DEFINITION.—Young Alfred, who is about to get married, said to a friend: "Recollect, you are invited to the celebration of my golden wedding, which is to take place in a fortnight." "What, your golden wedding?" "Yes. Why do you ask? You surely did not expect that I was going to marry for love?"

A CONCERNED young country parson, walking home from church with one of the ladies of his congregation, said, in allusion to his rustic audience, "I preached this morning to a congregation of donkeys."—"I thought of that," observed the lady, "when you called them 'beloved brethren.'"

POTICAL Jones says: "The profusion and colour of her hair would lead one to look upon it as though it was spun by the nimble fingers of the easy hours as they glided through bright June days, whose sunny rays of light had been caught in the meshes and were content to go no further."—Smith expresses the same thing by saying: "Her hair was awfully red."

RUSTIC SIMPLICITY.—The proprietor of a menagerie issued a placard offering £100 to any one who would enter the cage of the lion. Towards the end of the performance a peasant walked up to the lion-tamer and said: "Sir, I have come to earn the hundred pounds."—General horror. The lion-tamer replied with a derisive sneer: "So you want to go into the lion's cage?"—"Aye, sure," said the peasant.—"Come on then! There, I will open the trap-door for you, and you can step in."—"Well, yes," answered the honest countryman, turning to the audience with a broad grin on his face, "I am going in, but the beast will have to come out first. You know the paper only says: Anyone going into the cage shall have a hundred pounds."

The last thing from an impassioned printer to his sweetheart—"Would you were a note of exclamation and I a parenthesis (!)."

"Oh, Tommy, that was abominable in you to eat your little sister's share of the cake!"—"Why," said Tommy, "didn't you tell me, ma, that I was always to take her part?"

"Your behaviour is most singular, sir," said a young lady to a gentleman who had just stolen a kiss.—"If that is all," said he, "I will soon make it plural."

AN AMERICAN paper says, "We have adopted the eight-hour system in this office. We commence work at eight o'clock in the morning and close at eight in the evening."

WHATEVER his offence, you cannot justly blame a barrister who is briefless, because if you did so, you would blame the man without a cause.

A GENTLEMAN travelling homeward from Atlanta met an aged negro, whose hat was encircled with the creases of grief. "Have you lost a relative, my friend?" he said.—"Yes, Massa."—"Near or distant?"—"Pretty distant, Massa, about four-and-twenty miles!"

STEP-HUSBAND.—Two sons of Erin met recently, and interviewed as follows:—"Tom, supposing your wife got a divorce from you, and then married me, what relation would I be to you?"—"I couldn't tell you that, Jim."—"Why, I would be your step-husband," said Jim. "How is that?" asked Tom. "Because," returned Jim, "when you step out I step in."

AN INSECT.—"Sir," said a little bustling chap to a gentleman whom he derided for keeping his shop closed on Saturday; "I say, sir, to what sect do you think I belong?"—"Well, I don't exactly know," replied the other; "but, to judge from your make, size, and appearance, I should say you belonged to a class called the insect."

HE COULD HUG.—"Oh, will he bite?" exclaimed one of Middleton's sweetest girls, with a look of alarm, when she saw one of the dancing bears in the street the other day. "No," said her escort, "he cannot bite—he is muzzled; but he can hug."—"Oh," she said, with a distracting smile, "I don't mind that."

THE EXPLANATIONS.—The following instance of Irish circumlocution illustrates a point in the natural character of the Emerald Islanders. A gentleman observed one day, many years ago, before the reform of the Criminal law, a commotion in the streets of Derry. He inquired of a bystander the reason, and the man, with a mellifluous brogue, replied in the following metaphorical manner: "The rason, sir? Why, you see Justice and little Larry O'Hone, the carpenter, have been putting up a picture-frame at the end of the strate yonder, and they are going to hang one of Adam's copies in it."—"What's that?"—"Why, poor Murdoch O'Donnel!"—"Oh, there's a man to be hung?"—"Do they put up a gallows for any other purpose?"—"What is his offence?"—"No offence; it was only a little liberty he took."—"Well, what was the liberty?"—"Why, you see, sir, poor Murdoch was in delicate health, and his physician advised that he should take exercise on horseback; and so, having no horse of his own, he borrowed one from Squire Doyle's paddock. And no sooner was he on its shoulders than Ould Nick put it into the creature's head to go over to Kellogen's cattle-fair, where he had a good many acquaintances; and when he got there, Murdoch spied a friend at the door of the shebeen-house, and left the animal grazing outside whilst he went in to have a thimbleful of whisky; and then, you see, they got frisky, and had another and another, till poor Murdoch went to sleep on the binch; and, when he woke up, he found the creature gone and his pocket stuffed full with a big lump of money."—"In short," said the gentleman; "you mean to say he has been horse-stealing?"—"Why, sir," replied the Irishman, scratching his head; "they call it so in England!"

WHY is a hatter measuring caps like a ship overturning?—Because he's cap-sizing.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE—Your mother-in-law.

A BABY carriage is sometimes called a cycycle.

A YORKSHIRE tradesman doesn't advertise. He tells his wife.

IT is very unlucky to have thirteen at a table, particularly when there is only enough to satisfy the appetite of ten.

A COQUETTE is a woman without any heart that makes a fool of a man that ain't got any head.

"WELL, Pat, how's trade?" asked a stout person, addressing a grave-digger. "Poorly, surl, entirely; shure we haven't buried a livin' soul this three weeks!" replied Pat.

A LITTLE girl hearing her mother observe to another lady that she was going into half-mourning inquired whether any of her relations were half dead.

"LIKE eures like" is an old proverb. If your neighbour's daughter thumps the piano all night buy your daughter a brass drum.

Two young ladies and Mr. Thaddeus O'Grady were conversing on age, when one of them put the home question: "Waich of us do you think is the elder, Mr. O'G.?"—"S ure," replied the gallant Irishman, "you both look younger than each other."

IT is very amusing to gaze at the languishing masher, and hear him talk of "the softer sex."

PROVERBAL PHILOSOPHY.—Hunger is the best sauce; hence street-boys are naturally saucy. Many men, many minds; but one woman frequently has more than all of them. They who dance leave the host to pay the fiddler. What cannot be cured supports the doctors. A fair exchange would ruin the stock-market. There's many a smoke with no tobacco.

THE RIGHT SORT OF GIRL TO KEEP A SECRET.—COUNTRY maid-servant: "Gae me a third-class return ticket."—Booking-clerk: "Where to, please?"—COUNTRY maid-servant: "Never you mind that; gae me my ticket."—Booking-clerk: "But you must say where you're going?"—COUNTRY maid-servant: "I want nane o' yer impudence; you've nee business whar I'm gaun." Booking-clerk gives in, and quietly books her to the nearest terminus.

SOME little time after Lord Westbury's resignation, which took place in July, 1865, in consequence of a vote of censure attributing to him laxity and want of caution in filling up appointments and granting pensions to retiring public servants over whose heads grave charges were impending which was passed by the House of Commons, Bishop Wilberforce and Lord Westbury met face to face in the lobby of the House of Lords, one going out, the other entering, when Lord Westbury stopped the bishop, and, holding out his hand, said, "My Lord Bishop, as a Christian and a bishop, you will not refuse to shake hands." The bishop immediately responded to the proffered invitation. Lord Westbury then said, "Do you remember where we last met?" The Bishop: "No." Lord Westbury: "It was in the hour of my humiliation, when I was leaving the Queen's closet, having given up the great seal. I met you on the stairs as I was coming out, and felt inclined to say, 'Hast thou found me, oh, mine enemy?'" The bishop in relating this, used to say, "I never was so tempted in my life as I was then to finish the quotation, but by a great effort I kept it down, and said, 'Does your lordship remember the end of the quotation?'" Lord Westbury: "Well, lawyers, my Lord Bishop, are not in the habit of quoting part of a passage without knowing the whole." No doubt, as the bishop said, he went home and looked it out in his Family Bible, where he saw, "Yea, I have found thee, because thou hast taught thyself to work iniquity."

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCESS CHRISTIAN has offered a medal for the best piece of needlework in the Decorative Art Exhibition. The Countess Spencer has likewise offered a prize for the best Irish point lace exhibited.

The Emperor of Germany, with all his family and Court, attended a few days ago the opening of a handsome church in Berlin, which has been subscribed for to commemorate his Majesty's recovery from the wounds inflicted on him by Nobile in 1878.

BORTHWICK PASHA, a brother of Sir Algernon Borthwick, has been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the East Boumelian Militia, vice Stocker Pasha, resigned.

MADAME ROSA BONHEUR, is, we are glad to hear, approaching convalescence; she is now able to walk gently round her garden, and longs to return to her art, which is not one of labour to her.

THE PRINCESS FREDERICK CHARLES, wife of the Emperor of Germany's nephew, "the Black Prince," and mother of the Duchess of Connaught, is having the country seat of St. Georges, near Dessau, prepared for her reception, where she will henceforth reside.

THE CROWN PRINCE STEPHANIE OF AUSTRIA, who has been suffering from a mild attack of chicken-pox, is progressing rapidly towards convalescence. While there was some little anxiety attached to the Princess's condition, the Crown Prince Rudolph sent the Queen of the Belgians three times a day an account of her daughter's health.

THE EARL AND COUNTESS OF ONSLOW have returned to England from a lengthened tour in America. Lord Vernon has also arrived, after a two months' visit to our Transatlantic friends, and Lord and Lady Carrington, who have been travelling for some time in Canada and the United States, reached our shores a few days ago.

THE PRINCESS CHRISTIAN took part in the weekly entertainment to the inmates of the Consumption Hospital at Brompton, playing with much taste and execution two pianoforte solos, "Polonaise" (Moriusko) and "Lyrische Stückchen" (Grieg), as also two duets with Mr. Parratt, "March" (Schubert), and "Hungarian Dances" (Brahms). Her Royal Highness also played with Miss Shinner a "Lied" (Heller), and "Scherzo and Trio" (Grieg), for piano and violin, and accompanied the Hon. Mrs. North Dalrymple in a charming "Mélodie" for violin (Babinstein).

H.R.H. PRINCESS BEATRICE recently paid a private visit of inspection to Portsmouth Dock-yard. Her Royal Highness drove from Osborne to Cowes, and thence crossed the Solent in the royal yacht *Alberta*. Upon reaching the dock-yard she was received by General Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, and Admiral Superintendent Herbert. Her Royal Highness proceeded in a saloon train to the electric shops, where the latest electrical arrangements were explained to her, and the use of incandescent search lamps illustrated. The Princess then went on board the turret-ship *Dreadnought*, which is ready for commission if her services should be required. And the working of her 38-ton turret guns was shown by a party of seamen from the *Excellent*. Princess Beatrice next inspected the corvette *Bacchante*, in which the Royal midshipmen made their long cruise, and which is being refitted preparatory to being attached to another evolutionary squadron. Her Royal Highness afterwards went to the barbette ship *Camperdown*, and a call was next made at the smithery and block mills, the Princess being escorted by Admiral Herbert and Mr. W. Owen, chief constructor. Her Royal Highness afterwards drove to Government House, where she lunched with Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, and, returning to the dockyard, re-embarked on the *Alberta* and returned to Osborne.

STATISTICS.

THE JEWS OF VIENNA have an industrial school, in which children of their race are taught mechanical and artisan trades. It has already turned out 1,500 skilled mechanics. Last year the school had over 250 pupils, of whom forty were learning to be carpenters or cabinetmakers, sixty-five blacksmiths, sixty shoemakers, twenty-five turners of wood and metal, and forty whitesmiths. Others are being trained as wheelwrights and designers.

PROPORTIONS OF THE SEXES.—The new Census figures giving the relative proportions of the sexes are very striking. Out of a total population of 26,000,000, females are in excess of males to the extent of nearly 700,000. Yet, at birth, the males are in a majority. Within a year the balance turns another way, and so continues until the period between ten and fifteen years of age, when the males are again the greater number. But the ascendancy is only temporary; and in the next five years the strength of numbers is with the female sex, who retain this position until the close. In the advanced periods of life, the numerical superiority of the gentler sex is specially manifest. At the figure of "ninety-five and upwards," we find the females more than twice as numerous as the males; while of the 141 persons who are recorded as having attained the age of "100 and upwards," ninety-seven, or 68 per cent, are females.—*British Medical Journal*.

GEMS.

HE WHO HAS LOST HIS HONOUR CAN LOSE NOTHING MORE.

ALL THOSE WHO KNOW THEIR MIND DO NOT KNOW THEIR HEART.

AMONG INTELLIGENT PEOPLE ANTIHATHIES ARE MORE IRRECONCILIABLE THAN HATES.

IT IS AS DIFFICULT FOR REVENGE TO ACT WITHOUT EXCITING SUSPICION AS FOR A RATTLESNAKE TO STIR WITHOUT MAKING A NOISE.

ABSENCE DIMINISHES THE ORDINARY PASSIONS AND INCREASES THE GREAT ONES, AS THE WIND EXTINGUISHES THE CANDLE AND LIGHTS THE FIRE.

THERE ARE PERSONS WHO HAVE MORE INTELLIGENCE THAN TASTE, AND OTHERS WHO HAVE MORE TASTE THAN INTELLIGENCE. THERE IS MORE VANITY AND CAPRICE IN TASTE THAN IN INTELLIGENCE.

CONTENTMENT IS A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE, AND WHOEVER PROCURES IT AT THE EXPENSE OF TEN THOUSAND DESIRES MAKES A WISE AND HAPPY PURCHASE.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO DRESS CODFISH.—Soak and boil the cod-fish about an hour before dinner. Shred it up with two forks. Beat up some mealy Irish potatoes, and mix them together. Boil three or four eggs hard, chop them up, and mix them with the above. Then stir in a large lump of butter, some mustard, pepper and salt. Soften the whole with two or three tablespoonfuls of boiling water, and put it in a saucepan to heat until it is served up.

SMOTHERED RABBIT.—Clean the rabbit, wash it thoroughly, season it well with salt and pepper, lay it flat on the grid-iron, and broil it slowly. It should be a fine brown when done. Have ready eight or ten large onions, boil and mashed with a piece of butter; some pepper and salt. Baste the rabbit with butter, and pour the mashed onions over it, so as to cover it entirely. Serve it immediately.

HAM TOAST.—Melt in a stewpan a small piece of butter till it is browned a little. Put in as much finely-minced ham as will cover a large round of buttered toast, and add as much gravy as will make it moist. When quite hot, stir in quickly with a fork one egg. Place the mixture over the toast, which cut in pieces of any shape you may fancy.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HE WHO LOSES HOPE MAY THEN PART WITH ANYTHING.

GRANDPARENTS.—Nobody who has been active and useful enjoys the feeling of being laid on the shelf. Grandfather's step is uncertain, his arm less vigorous than of old, but he possesses a rich treasure of experience, and he likes to be consulted. It is his privilege to give advice. Grandmother does not want to be left out of the household work. When the days come for pickling and preserving, who so eager as she? It is cruel to overrule her decisions, to put her aside because "she will be tired." Of course she will be tired, but she will enjoy the fatigue, and rest the sooner for the thought that she is still of use in the world.

VARIETY IN COACH TRAVELLING.—In England a coach journey is regarded as one of the most charming and delightful methods of locomotion, given good roads and summer weather of course. A gentleman was in the company of some Australian friends the other day. A Queenslander was boasting that his district was far ahead of any other known place in the accommodation, comfort, and variety of its coach travelling. "Variety! certainly!" replied a Victorian. "This was the variety when I travelled there lately. You could book first, second, or third class. Where the roads got deep and awkward, first-class passengers had the privilege of walking on ahead, second-class kept by the horses to beat them up with long saplings, whilst the third pushed the coach from behind."

PEOPLE TALK OF "GETTING OVER" A GREAT SORROW—PASSING IT BY, THRUSTING IT INTO OBLIVION. NO ONE EVER DOES THAT—AT LEAST NO NATURE WHICH CAN BE TOUCHED BY THE FEELING OF GRIEF. THE ONLY WAY IS TO PASS THROUGH THE OCEAN OF AFFLCTION SOLEMNLY, WITH HUMILITY AND FAITH, AS THE ISRAELITES PASSED THROUGH THE SEA. THEN ITS VERY WAVES OF MISERY WILL DIVIDE AND BECOME TO US A WALL ON THE RIGHT SIDE AND ON THE LEFT, UNTIL THE GULF NARROWS AND NARROWS BEFORE US, AND WE LAND SAFE ON THE OPPOSITE SHORE.

MR. BARNUM'S FAMOUS WHITE ELEPHANT has at last been housed in the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens until milder weather shall permit the treasure to be removed to America, as a Transatlantic winter climate is considered too severe for him. "Young Taloung," or, as he is called at home, "Kyan Zone," or "White and Sacred," is certainly not pure white, strictly speaking, but rather a light ash colour, with whitish patches, his face, ears, front of trunk, fore feet, and part of his breast being a pinkish flesh-colour. He stands about $\frac{7}{8}$ feet high—3 feet 8 inches less than Jumbo. The sacred animal is quite well, and behaved capitally during his journey from Rangoon in the *Tenasserim*, where he inhabited a specially constructed deck house, being brought thence to Euston by rail. The Buddhist priests who are to watch over the elephant will arrive about a fortnight later, as they could not leave Rangoon in time to accompany their charge, which was brought by night marches from Mandalay to Moulmein, and thence shipped to Rangoon. Two Barman attendants, however, have accompanied the animal. King Theebaw signed the deed of sale to the "rich man"—as Mr. Barnum is styled, the compact concluding thus:—"We having sworn him (Barnum's agent) before God and under the Bo (holy) tree on the hill, he promised that he will take him (the elephant) straightly to his master, to love and protect him from misery; if not he knows that the sin cannot escape Hell. We have got from Mullikin Master 15,000 rupees to repair our God's images and monasteries. We write and give this document with our free will and coasent." It is to be hoped Mr. Barnum will be more fortunate with this animal than with the first white elephant he bought, which was poisoned by some fanatic at Singapore.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. M. J.—The child can be affiliated.

J. B. M.—The relationship is that of second cousins.

S.—Kismet is an Arabic word, and means that which is fated.

S. M. R.—The violin is a very difficult instrument for an adult to acquire.

Tom M.—Handwriting very good, and shows careful training.

A. B. C.—The indentures if properly drawn are binding on the father.

S. B. G.—Six months' notice is required, terminating with the date at which the tenancy commenced.

G. R.—The longest verse in the Bible is the 9th verse of the 8th chapter of Esther. 2. Your handwriting is very good.

N. D.—You are both too young to "keep company," more especially the young girl, who should wait until she is out of her teens before thinking of loving a boy.

R. D.—We know nothing of the virtue of either preparation. We suggest that you let every recipe of the kind alone.

L. M.—The Union Pacific Railroad, 1,700 miles long, from Omaha to San Francisco, was opened for traffic on May 12, 1868.

M. N.—Swift in his "Gulliver's Travels" gives the name of Fakos to one of a race of brutes having the form and all the vices, of man.

Kirke Clover.—The young man cannot be worth very much if he has behaved to two young ladies as you describe. Have nothing to do with him.

S. R.—We can find no reference to the existence of a paper bearing the name given. It doubtless ceased publication some time ago.

Burg Gown.—We would advise you to get, if possible, a situation with a good architect. The practical knowledge gained in this way you would find of inestimable value.

C. F.—The dance of which you speak is a very old-fashioned one, and is seldom seen at the present day. It is not to be found in any of the dance books now published.

L. M.—Get a person thoroughly conversant with piano repairing to attend to the instrument; otherwise it is very likely you will spoil it, from a lack of practical knowledge.

T. D.—Consult a physician immediately. We know so little of your case from the description given that it would be impossible to recommend any strengthening compound. Your system appears to be completely broken down, and the only resource is that recommended.

F. W. J.—1. There is no known method of removing moles. 2. The multiplication table is supposed to have been invented by the celebrated Greek philosopher and teacher, Pythagoras, who flourished more than five hundred years before the Christian era. 3. Inquire at a book store.

C. L. B.—To polish a gun barrel, first rub it with very finely powdered pumice stone and water; then very patiently with a rag wet with linseed oil. Last of all, clean the surface with a soft linen cloth devoid of all greasiness, dipped in powdered starch, and then rub briskly with the palm of the hand.

OLIVE.—Stains on linen occasioned by fruit, iron rust, and similar causes, may be removed by applying to the parts injured a weak solution of the chloride of lime, the article having been previously well washed. Then rinse the parts subjected to the operation in soft, clear, warm water, without soap, and hang out to dry in the sun.

T. L.—1. The engagement ring is not necessarily a diamond one; it may be of other stone. You should be governed in the purchase of such by the length of your purse. 2. The ring may be worn upon the third finger of the right hand. It is also worn by some on the third finger of the left hand, being replaced by the wedding ring.

GRATIE.—It would be advisable, if you desire to live happily, to marry the man you love, and we can see no reason, provided he is a worthy object of that affection, for objection on the part of your parents. Perhaps, however, there is some objection to him which you have not mentioned. As you do not love the other party, it would be well to let him know that such is the case, and relieve him of his suspense.

K. G. B.—1. The young lady makes a mistake when she supposes that the present you have given her should be returned in kind. That is not the true idea of present giving. Consequently she may or may not give you something in return. 2. Prove to her the falsity of the reports concerning your constancy by living an upright, honourable life. This is the only way to refute the slanders of your enemies. 3. Excuse the lady's actions on account of the reasons given in reply to your first question above.

G. H.—1. Petroleum is a natural product sold under innumerable names, such as saxoline, coal-oil, kerosene, &c. This latter name was first used in 1846 by a man who applied it to an oil obtained from coal found on Prince Edward's Island. 2. The invention of lamps is ascribed to the Egyptians, being known in the days of

Moses and Job. The use of them passed from Egypt to Greece, and from there to Rome. A little more than 100 years ago lamps were made in Germany with flat, braided wicks, which were moved up and down by turning a little screw somewhat similar to that seen in the lamps of the present day. The Argand burner, named after its inventor, Aime Argand, was invented in 1782.

C. M. N.—A water bath consists of one vessel within another, secured so that they cannot come in contact at any point below the level of the water which has been introduced to fill up the space between them. A double glue-pot is a water-bath.

M. R.—Under the peculiar circumstances which you mention, you will have to wait the gentleman's convenience, but in the interim you can suggest to him that it would be a pleasure to you to have your father consulted upon the subject.

C. C.—Dolly Varden is one of the characters in Dickens's "Barnaby Rudge." She was very much loved by Joe Willet, Hugo of the Maypole Inn, and Simon Tappertit. Dolly dressed in the W.-town style, and was exceedingly lively and pretty. Her father, Varden, was a locksmith.

S. J.—Add one ounce of alum to the last water used to rinse children's dresses, and they will be rendered uninflammable, or so slightly combustible that they would take fire very slowly, if at all, and would not flame. This is a simple precaution, which may be adopted in families of children. Bed curtains, and linings in general, may also be treated in the same way.

ONE DAY.

When the purple shadows hover
In the twilight grey and still,
And the wing of night is resting
Softly on the distant hill;
When the bells of sunset chiming
Echo with eternal calm,
Like the last g and chord harmonious
Of life's closing evening psalm.

When the hush of sleeping myriads
Rhythms with the song of spheres,
And the tread of passing moments
Tolls the end of day and night;
When the solemn tide is ebbing
Softly from the rocky shore,
And the ships go out of harbour
To come back again no more.

I shall also weigh life's anchor,
I too, drift upon the tide.
One day you shall say to others :
"It was ye that did me die."
One day I shall know the resting
The prophetic angels tell,
And the joy of heavenly greeting :
One day I will be well.

M. M.

H. K. M.—1. It is the lady's prerogative to extend an invitation to the gentleman to call again. If you consider his company agreeable, do not hesitate to extend such an invitation. 2. Persistent practice will tend to improve your handwriting, which at the present time is rather below the average. 3. When introducing a lady to a gentleman, mention her name first, as "Miss James; allow me to introduce you to Mr. Burt."

C. F.—The tragedy of "The Gamester" was written by Edward Moore, who died in London in 1757. His first poetical work, entitled "Fables for the Female Sex," appeared in 1744. In 1750 he married Miss Hamilton, who secured a place in the royal household. In 1751 he became editor of the *World*, in which his own articles appeared under the pseudonym of Adam Fitz Adam. He was the author of two comedies, of which failed, "The Gamester," which appeared in 1753, achieved great popularity, and is still performed.

W. R.—The magnolia is found in India, China, and Japan, but most of the shrubs and trees called by that name belong to N. America. The principal kinds in the United States are the laurel magnolia or sweet bay, which grows in nearly all the States; the great-leaved magnolia, which grows south of Kentucky; and the great-flowered magnolia, which grows from North Carolina southward. The last is an evergreen, and is the most beautiful of all the magnolias. The flowers are large, pure white, and very sweet. The magnolia was named after Pierre Magnol, professor of botany at Montpellier, France, in the seventeenth century.

M. B.—It is said that certain Eastern nations have a fanciful belief that each month of the year is under the influence of a precious stone or gem, which influences the destiny of a person born during that particular month. Hence the customs among friends and lovers to make presents of these natal gems, the significations of which are given in detail as follows: January, garnet, constancy and fidelity; February, amethyst, sincerity; March, bloodstone, courage, and presence of mind; April, diamond, innocence; May, emerald, success; June, agate, health and long life; July, coral, contented mind; August, sardonyx, conjugal fidelity; September, chrysolite, antidote against madness; October, opal, hope; November, topaz, fidelity; December, turquois, prosperity.

J. M. V.—The phases which the moon presents periodically are caused by the position which she assumes in relation to the sun and the earth. When between these two bodies she is not visible to us; but as she recedes from the sun, a portion of the illuminated surface

assuming the shape of a sickle, with the horns turned towards the sun, can be seen until it becomes, in about eight days, a bright semi-circular disc, which is known as the moon's first quarter. In about another week this luminary stands about opposite the sun and exhibits a complete circle, called the full moon, rising when the sun sets, and shining all night. Then, as the sun is again approached, the moon decreases daily on the side most distant from it, gradually reassuming the sickle shape, but with the horns turned away from the sun.

S. P. T.—No specific rules are laid down in etiquette concerning the mode of treating visitors who make your house their home for the time being. Offer them the best you have in the way of food and rooms, and never express a regret, or make an excuse, that you have nothing better to give them. Try to make them feel at home by rendering their stay as pleasant as possible. This constitutes true hospitality.

L. V. D.—1. Butter was but little known to the ancients. It is said to have been first discovered by carrying milk in skin bottles on a camel, the butter being made by the jolting. It is still made in many parts of South America by putting the cream into gourds, or skin bags, and slinging them across the back of a donkey, and then trotting the animal around until the churning is completed. 2. We are not prepared to state which is the most approved shape of churns, but will refer you for this information to some of your farmer friends.

E. S. D.—1. There is no way in which deep-seated scars can be removed from any portion of the body. 2. Several remedies are recommended by different authorities for the cure of tetser, the simplest among which is to moisten the affected part with saliva and rub it over thoroughly three times a day with the ashes of a good cigar. It is stated that this remedy has cured some of the most obstinate cases. Another is to dissolve one ounce of sulphide of potash in a quart of cold, soft water, put it in a bottle and keep it tightly corked. Bathe the eruption five or six times a day with a sponge dipped in a little of this solution.

L. V. D.—All the symptoms described are associated with dyspepsia. In every case of this kind the first thing the patient should do is to abstain from whatever food may have tended to produce it. Upon all points of eating and drinking you must be governed by your own experience. Mutton, fowl, and game are the most digestible of all animal foods, but salt or fresh pork, dried beef, tongue, &c., should be avoided; as also salads, half-cooked vegetables, cucumbers, &c. Oatmeal acts differently with various persons, and you must therefore be governed in its use by your feelings. Dyspepsia should avoid stimulating drinks. Take plenty of exercise, keep your system in good order, and it will not be long before you will be rid of the trouble.

F. J. I.—1. At a very early period attempts were made to form needles or bodkins of bone and ivory, and many of large size have been found in Egyptian tombs, which must have been made four thousand years ago. The Spanish or steel needle was introduced into England in the time of Queen Elizabeth; but the process by which it was made was kept secret, and the art was unknown until the year 1650, when it was revived by Christopher Greening, at Long Crendon in Buckinghamshire. Though very simple in its form and appearance, the needle requires many operations for its construction, passing through the hands of nearly one hundred workmen. 2. Address a letter to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Whitehall, S. W.

W. R.—The term "blue stocking" is derived from the name given to certain meetings held by ladies in the days of Doctor Johnson, the eminent English lexicographer and miscellaneous writer, for conversation with distinguished literary men. One of the most eminent members was a Mr. Stillingfleet, who always wore blue stockings. So distinguished was he for his conversational powers that his absence at any time was felt to be a great loss, giving rise to the common remark, among the other members, "We can do nothing without the blue stockings." From this circumstance these meetings were sportively termed "blue-stocking clubs," and the ladies who attended them "blue stockings." At the present day the term is applied to literary ladies.

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